

"We are realists... we dream the impossible" - Che



Fire This Time!



BUILT ON LIES

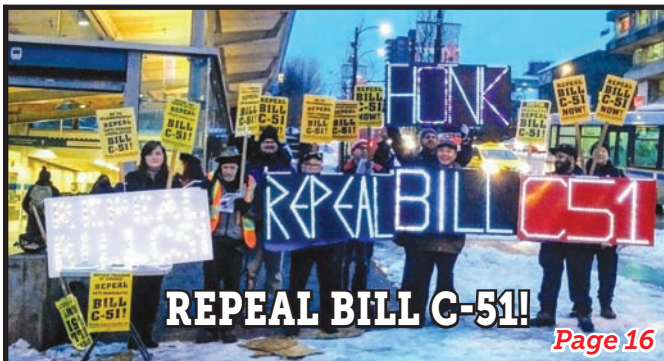
**TRUDEAU'S
PIPELINE
PROMISES
DON'T ADD UP**

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FIDEL



TRUTH OR LIES IN ALEPPO AND SYRIA?

US AMBASSADOR TO UN, SAMANTHA POWER, DEFENDS IMPERIALIST INTERESTS IN SYRIA WITH LIES AND DECEPTION

By Nita Palmer

As a new year begins, the eyes of the world are on Aleppo, where the Syrian army and their allies have recaptured the city from the armed insurgents which have ruled the city's east since 2012.

As the last neighbourhoods held by insurgents were liberated by the Syrian Army in mid-December, residents of Aleppo began pouring onto the streets, celebrating the victory. However, it was a bittersweet moment for many of Aleppo's residents. As the celebrations died down, many began returning to their homes for the first time, only to find them destroyed. Others mourned the loss of children and parents, family and friends. Infrastructure can be rebuilt – although many of old Aleppo's beautiful buildings are gone – but the lives lost cannot ever be replaced.

Samantha Power Defends Imperialist Interests in Aleppo

Yet instead of celebrating the victory of a secular, democratic government over terrorist groups - some with ties to al-Qaeda - politicians and major news outlets in the U.S. began lashing out at the Syrian government for alleged 'war crimes'. In a December 14 briefing to the UN Security

Council, U.S. Ambassador to the UN, Samantha Power, attacked the Syrian government and its allies for their campaign in Aleppo.

Citing "video testimony [and] phone calls" as evidence, Ambassador Power went on to accuse "pro-Assad forces" of rape, torture, and murder of civilians, claiming that they were showing "no mercy". This version of events has been echoed by nearly every major Western news agency. Yet there is an appalling lack of evidence to back up Ms. Power's claims. There have been few, if any, journalists from major news media in Aleppo since the start of the war. Instead, news outlets have relied on social media and "citizen journalists" friendly to the terrorist insurgent forces for information on events in east Aleppo. As a result, the only 'news' which came out of the terrorist-controlled areas was essentially propaganda in their interest. Anyone who tried to report differently was liable to be kidnapped or executed, as a handful of journalists tragically learned.

U.S. Defends Terrorist War Criminals

Conspicuously absent from Ms. Power's report was any criticism whatsoever of the bloodthirsty terrorist groups which have held east Aleppo under siege. These groups – which the U.S. government calls 'moderate rebels' – have been responsible for torture, hostage-taking, and public executions. In addition, they have imposed extreme interpretations of Islamic law in areas they have captured, according to a



Media like BBC & AlJazeera spreading lies like bombs against Syria

report by Amnesty International ('Torture Was My Punishment', July 2016). One resident of Aleppo told Amnesty International: "I witnessed the summary killing of two captured shabiha [pro-government] fighters by the al-Shamia Front in front of al-Shifa hospital in Aleppo city on two separate dates in 2015. The al-Shamia Front announced the execution publicly and then shot them with a rifle. They left the bodies for a few hours on the street for people to see".

Upon liberating east Aleppo from these terrorist groups, Syrian military forces and their supporting allies made a gruesome discovery: mass graves left by these so-called 'moderates'. According to Major General Igor Konashenkov, they contained the bodies of "several dozen Syrians who suffered atrocious torture and massacre".

And while Ms. Power was condemning the Syrian government for supposedly not cooperating with UN/International Committee of the Red Cross evacuation efforts, the so-called 'moderate rebels' were targeting civilians trying to flee east Aleppo with mortar fire, according to a report by The Independent. Rebel groups also set fire to several busses sent by the Syrian government to evacuate civilians from rebel-held areas.

It is appalling that Ms. Power – who has built a career as a human rights activist and author – would look past such heinous crimes. Yet she – and the U.S. government which she represents – seem all too willing to turn a blind eye to the actions of these terrorists.

From day one of Syria's 'civil war', the U.S., Turkey, and Saudi Arabia have been training, funding, and arming Syria's so-called 'rebels'. The Pentagon launched a \$500 million dollar program to support and train these insurgents. While that program has been discontinued, the CIA still operates several others with the same purpose. In December 2016, U.S. Congress



East Aleppo residents leaving for West Aleppo, Dec. 2016.

passed a defense bill which would make it easier for the U.S. to send portable anti-aircraft missiles to the insurgents.

Beneath the veil of 'human rights', the U.S. government is hiding their true intention of removing President Bashar al-Assad from power. Washington sees the independent government of Syria and its alliance with Iran and Hezbollah in Lebanon as a threat to U.S. interests in the region. The greater U.S. objective in the Middle East is not stopping terrorism and promoting human rights, but controlling the region in order to maintain access to trade markets and resources and gain the upper hand over growing economic competitors such as China and Russia.

Ms. Power's Hypocrisy on 'Human Rights'

In her statement to the UN Security Council, Ms. Power asked of the Syrian government: "Is there literally nothing that can shame you? Is there no act of barbarism against civilians, no execution of a child that gets under your skin, that just creeps you out a little bit? Is there nothing you will not lie about or justify?"

Ms. Power, I am appalled at your hypocrisy. Do you – and the United States government – not feel shame over the Syrian lives which have been needlessly destroyed in your bombings? No shame for the hundreds of thousands of lives lost in this war, or for the eleven million who have been displaced from their homes? What about for the four million children who should have enjoyed one of the best education systems in the region, but instead have been unable to attend school due to the war? Do you not feel shame for destabilizing an entire country, for arming and funding insurgents who have torn a once-peaceful nation apart? Do you feel no shame for helping to create the monster that is ISIS, which has tortured, raped, and murdered so many men, women, and children?

And beyond Syria, do you feel no shame at the slaughter of over a million in Iraq? At the children being born there with horrible disfigurements as a result of your depleted uranium (DU) ammunitions and weapons? Does the horrendous torture that so many have faced in your prisons at Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib not 'creep you out' even a bit? Do you feel no shame at the thousands of Afghan children who will starve or freeze this winter in the country you supposedly 'liberated'? No shame at the young girls who will be raped by gangs in Libya which never existed until you 'liberated' the country? No, Ms. Power, the real question is where is your shame? Where was Ms. Power, the human rights crusader, when your own government was committing these horrendous crimes?

Shame on you, Ms. Power, and shame on the United States government and its allies for destroying so many lives while trying to justify your war under the guise of humanitarianism.

The Battle for Syria Continues

Despite all that the U.S. government has done to try and tip the scales in favour of the terrorists, the Syrian government has regained control of Aleppo. They have subsequently brokered a ceasefire with some of the insurgent groups (Daesh and the al-Qaeda linked al-Nusra Front/Jabhat Fatah al-Sham are excluded).

While the liberation of Aleppo was an important victory for the Syrian government and the Syrian people, in no way is the fight to defend Syria from foreign intervention and foreign-supported terrorist groups over. Daesh (or ISIS/ISIL) and other terrorist groups still hold large parts of Syria in their grasp, inflicting terror on millions. Thousands of Turkish and U.S. troops remain in Syria under the guise of fighting Daesh, though they are there without the invitation or consent of the Syrian government. The U.S. has been conducting regular air strikes, often killing Syrian civilians.

There can be no peace in Syria while U.S., Turkish, or other foreign occupation forces remain in the country. These were the forces which created the war in Syria to begin with – surely they will not put an end to it now. The only way forward is for the Syrian government to take the lead in the fight against Daesh and the other terrorists. Any foreign forces which join the fight must be there at the invitation of, and working with, not against, the Syrian government.

Join the Movement to End the War in Syria in 2017!

The proxy war in Syria and all direct intervention by the U.S. and their allies must be put to an end. The lives of millions of Syrians depend on it. We cannot rely on fake 'humanitarians' like Ambassador



Samantha Power, US Ambassador to the United Nations, tries to shame Syria, Russia and Iran over Aleppo, Dec 2016.



Protesters at a Mobilization Against War & Occupation (MAWO) rally in Vancouver demand Hands Off Syria.



Power and the U.S. government to bring peace to the country.

It is up to peace-loving people like you and I to demand an end to this war. In 2017, let us work together to organize a creative, dynamic, and effective campaign for an end to war and foreign intervention in Syria!

Hands Off Syria Now! No War on Syria!
U.S. and Turkey Out of Syria Now!

Follow Nita on Twitter: @NGP1z0



BOLIVIAN FILMMAKER DEBUNKS MAINSTREAM MEDIA LIES ON SYRIA

Carla Ortiz, in Syria during filming of her upcoming documentary

After eight months filming a documentary in Syria, a Bolivian actress and filmmaker is contradicting the mainstream media's narrative as she argues that the Syrian government has not, in fact, shot at militants leaving Aleppo.

Carla Ortiz, who is filming a documentary on the lives of the people caught in the conflict, said she witnessed the evacuation efforts herself, including that of civilian families as well as of militants. In a video from the upcoming film, titled "Voice of Syria," she documents the peaceful evacuation process from Eastern Aleppo, effectively debunking mainstream media narratives claiming the opposite.

"I was right there in six different front lines, and I talked to the people when they were getting in the buses...at the shelters, and actually the evacuation wasn't burning, there was not mass shooting anywhere on the streets," she exposed during a recent interview with Fox 11 news.

During her eight months there, she covered nearly 75 percent of the country, including in Palmyra as it was recovered by Syrian forces, she told the Fox 11 hosts.

While she makes it clear that she is "not a journalist," she stressed the fact that she had nevertheless obtained clear video evidence of the evacuation process during the "10 decisive days when Aleppo, from one side was free and liberated from the other side."

In a Facebook post published afterwards, Ortiz also pointed out that "what the Syrian army and civilians were doing was throwing food through the windows"

of the buses that transported the evacuees out of the city, reported RT.

Echoing recent reports from journalists on the ground, she also contested the legitimacy of the "witness reports" supposedly emerging from then-rebel-occupied areas, often claiming to possibly be "their last" message. Noting the lack of Internet connectivity and infrastructure in eastern Aleppo, Ortiz questioned whether those videos were actually coming from the region as well as the motives of those posting them.

"Who are these fake accounts on Twitter that are saying that Aleppo is burning, that there is mass shooting," she said during the Fox 11 interview. "I'm right here at the front line. I have no Twitter...there is no way, no connection, no electricity for more than 75 days."

While she recognized that Aleppo had indeed been destroyed by the fighting between Syrian government forces (with Russia's help) and opposition groups, she stressed that life under the so-called rebels was "really inhuman." She furthermore noted that, from what she saw, most opposition militants were actually foreign mercenaries.

"When you talk to someone who just left east Aleppo, they tell you that most terrorists are not even Syrians," Ortiz told RT in another

interview.

She also said that despite Syrians' political beliefs or affiliations, they were all just happy to be free from militant oppression, adding that they are "all praying for a real ceasefire," and that, despite the mainstream narrative, there is a moderate opposition who simply wanted reforms, not for their government to resign.

On Friday, the Syrian government and opposition groups in the country reached a nationwide cease-fire agreement, which includes measures to monitor the deal and a statement on the readiness to start peace talks to settle the Syrian crisis.

Ortiz film will be out in the summer 2017.

Reprinted from: www.telesurtyv.net



David distributes Fire This Time Newspaper at a rally in Vancouver against war on Syria, March 2016.

BUILT ON LIES

TRUDEAU'S PIPELINE PROMISES FALL SHORT

By Thomas Davies

"Pipelines may be straight, but the stories behind them have many twists and turns."
- Canadian Natural Resources Minister Jim Carr

Justin Trudeau closed up 2016 with the bombshell announcement that he was approving both the Kinder Morgan and Line 3 pipelines. Together they add up to almost 1.5 million barrels a day of added capacity to ship some of the dirtiest oil on earth from the Alberta tar sands. He proclaimed that building these pipelines was an essential part of the government's plan to help save the environment while ensuring economic benefits for workers and their families. It doesn't take a lot of looking into to find out that Trudeau's pipeline promises are built on lies and manipulations.

It Does Not Add Up

"You also must have known that allowing two pipelines to carry over a million barrels a day of additional tar sands production is not the way we are going to solve the climate crisis. No one could truly believe that more oil will help us get off oil. It's too ludicrous to even contemplate."

- Grand Chief

Steward Phillip in an Open Letter to Justin Trudeau

What's most important to realize, is that these pipelines are part of an effort by oil corporations to lock us into the same dirty



oil economy which got the planet into this mess in the first place. Right now oil sands producers are shipping less than the current pipeline capacity - more than 400,000 barrels per day under! However, the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers is planning for 3.7 million barrels per day of oil sands production by 2030, up from 2.4 million barrels per day in 2015. They then plan on shipping 4.3 million barrels per day by 2040. There is no way Canada could meet any reasonable climate targets this way. Especially since per barrel emissions actually grew by 25 per cent in the last decade.

We need to remember that conservative scientific estimates show that even if all of the existing oil wells and coal mines around the world are fully exploited, it would release enough CO2 into the atmosphere to take the planet above the 2 C temperature rise countries including Canada and the United States have agreed must be avoided to save the planet.

Fear Tactics

"Putting in a pipeline is a way of preventing oil by rail, which is more dangerous and more expensive ... The pipelines are very much integrated into our Pan-Canadian framework on fighting climate change." - Justin Trudeau, interview with Vancouver Sun and Vancouver Province Editorial Boards

Trudeau has repeated this lie over and over again, even though he knows it's just not true. At its very peak, oil-by-rail accounted for less than 7% of total Canadian oil exports. Canadian oil corporations don't have anywhere close to the ability or interest to ship this way, but they have been happy to use this fear of oil-train disasters to try and convince people of the necessity of new pipelines.

There is also the misleading assumption that there is absolutely no alternative to extracting the expensive, dangerous and environmentally destructive tar sands oil. Is this really so necessary? Since 2009 in the US, the cost of solar power has been cut by nearly half and wind power has fallen by two thirds. These installations are now cheaper than coal in many places. These also aren't the only new technologies, or the only realistic proposals to create jobs and without destroying the planet. The International Monetary Fund estimates that energy subsidies in Canada top an incredible \$34 billion each year in direct support to oil producers and uncollected tax on externalized costs. Imagine if those resources were put towards environmental friendly initiatives instead!

No Consent No Pipeline

"The federal government also reiterates its commitment to renewed nation-to-nation, government-to-government, and Inuit-to-Crown relationships with First Nations, the Métis Nation and Inuit, based on the recognition of rights, respect, cooperation, and partnership, consistent with the Government of Canada's support for the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, including free, prior and informed consent."

- Introduction to Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change

No matter how much Justin Trudeau tries to wiggle around it, more than two-thirds of indigenous nations whose land the Kinder Morgan pipeline would cross have not consented to the pipeline, and many such as the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh are part of leading the opposition it. Trudeau has now come out to say "they don't have veto power" - meaning he would try to move forward with the pipeline without the promised "free, prior and informed" consent of indigenous nations. He can't have it both ways - celebrate a "new relationship" and "reconciliation" only with the indigenous nations who he agrees with while ignoring and many disrespecting the others.

While Kinder Morgan is promising millions of dollars to many indigenous nations which face extreme poverty if they agree to the pipeline, Erica Violet Lee, a student and writer from Saskatoon and Thunderchild First Nation points out that,



“the reason we’re living in poverty now is because of centuries of violent attempts to remove us from our lands. Native people deserve safe housing, clean water, and healthy food to eat without having to sell our souls to TransCanada, Kinder Morgan, De Beers, and Enbridge in order to pay for it.”

Who Benefits?

“And as I said in making the announcement, these approvals are a major win for Canadian workers, for Canadian families and for the Canadian economy.”

- Justin Trudeau, December 21 at Calgary Chamber of Commerce

There is an important distinction to be made between corporate profits, and the earnings of regular poor and working people. Just because corporate profits go up, does not mean our wages do. In fact, it’s been exactly the opposite. Unless you are one of Canada’s top-paid 100 CEO’s and earn 9.5 million a year. According to Global News, “That works out to 193 times the average Canadian’s wage of \$49,510. Put another way, someone who makes \$9.5 million will have made the average Canadian’s salary for the year by 11:47 a.m. on January 3.”

Oil corporations don’t care about the livelihoods of their workers. 170 workers at an oil camp lodge recently lost their jobs the day after Christmas because the Civeo corporation said they had found cheaper non-union contractors. The employees had already given up increases to pay and travel expenses, but the company demanded a 44 percent pay reduction. Civeo had recently posted an 11% increase in lodge revenues!

We Won’t Stop Until They Do

Justin Trudeau’s late December public relations trip to Vancouver to justify the pipeline decision involved a secretive schedule and no public appearances. Regardless, he was “welcomed” the night before his arrival by hundreds of protesters who gave up family holiday plans and braved the icy streets to send a strong message that he wasn’t welcome. Similarly, Kinder Morgan’s recent attempt to hold a public information session in the suburb of Coquitlam came to an abrupt end when protestors peacefully entered the hotel where the session was being held. When it became obvious that those opposed to the pipeline were a much larger number than all of the staff and supporters combined, supervisors told staff to leave. 20,000 people have also now signed the

the Coast Protectors Pledge that, “With our voice, in the courts or the streets, on the water or the land. Whatever it takes, we will stop the Kinder Morgan pipeline expansion.”

The message is clear: Wherever Justin Trudeau or Kinder Morgan goes to try and justify or build this pipeline, we will be there to make sure the united voice of indigenous nations, students, poor and working people is heard. This pipeline will not be built!

“No Consent No Pipeline!”

“From Standing Rock to BC, Make the Land Pipeline Free!”

*Follow Thomas Davies on Twitter:
@thomasdavies59*

BRITISH COLUMBIA STUDENTS OPPOSE KINDER MORGAN PIPELINE

We, the undersigned student societies representing over 220,000 students from across British Columbia, are deeply disappointed in the federal government’s decision to approve the Kinder Morgan pipeline. The decision ignores the opposition of First Nations, represents a reckless endangerment of the fragile environment and economy of the Salish Sea, and fails to take responsibility over Canada’s climate change emissions, thus ignoring the dangers of climate change.

The current government has spoken of a renewed relationship with the First Nations in Canada. This decision railroads the opposition of many First Nations, continuing a history of paternalistic colonial attitudes. It is vital the government of Canada follow through on the commitment Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has made about a new relationship; approving this pipeline is not a new relationship.

The Kinder Morgan pipeline will bring about a six-fold expansion in oil tanker traffic in the Salish Sea, passing through the Burrard Inlet, under the Lions Gate Bridge, around Stanley Park and through waters inhabited by one of the most diverse and treasured ecosystems in the world. The threat of a spill, and as we have recently seen, the complete failure of spill response, place our treasured environment at a risk that we believe is too great to justify. One major spill would result in disaster to the environment, irreparably harm our tourism industry and

destroy our fishing and wildlife industries. For economic and environmental reasons, this pipeline should not be approved.

Lastly, the world is severely threatened by accelerating climate change. This pipeline represents an expansion to fossil fuel emissions that will fatally harm Canada’s ability to live up to our Paris climate emissions targets, and thus fail to live up to our collective responsibility to leave a planet that is still habitable for future generations. As students, we are the youth of today, and we demand better from our government – not just for the environment, but for the future that we must live in.

We are frustrated and angry that the federal government has so thoroughly ignored the needs of British Columbia, and we continue to stand in opposition to the development of the Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain pipeline.

Simon Fraser University Graduate Student Society, Capilano University Students’ Union, Kwantlen Student Association, Alma Mater Society of the University of British Columbia, Selkirk College Students’ Union, College of New Caledonia Students’ Union, Douglas Students’ Union, Okanagan College Students’ Union, Vancouver Island University Students’ Union, Northwest Community College Students’ Union, North Island Students’ Union, Students’ Union of Vancouver Community College, Camosun College Student Society, Emily Carr Students’ Union



Fire This Time!

Fire This Time 2017 Campaign

GOAL: \$30,000

A Fundraising Appeal!

JANUARY 1 TO MARCH 1 2017



**THIS IS WHAT PEOPLE ARE
SAYING AND WRITING ABOUT
FIRE THIS TIME** ▶▶▶

"Fire This Time Rocks!"

**"Fire This Time is the best
alternative newspaper in
Canada!"**

**"This is the only
newspaper I trust!"**

**"I don't watch CNN
I read your paper,
it's the real news."**

**"fantastic, bold &
great analysis"**

Dear Fire This Time Reader,

In April, 2016 we celebrated one decade of publishing the Fire This Time Newspaper! One decade of refusing to be silent and reflecting the battle of ideas that is shaping the political, economic and social fabrics of our society. With the perspective that, "Every international fight is local and every local fight is international," we continually analyze and highlight the resistance and fight back of working and oppressed people across the globe for their rights and for a

dignified life.

OVER THE LAST DECADE, WE HAVE PUBLISHED 10 VOLUMES AND DISTRIBUTED OVER 700,000 INDIVIDUAL COPIES OF FIRE THIS TIME AT BUS STATIONS, RALLIES, PICKET LINES, INTERNATIONAL GATHERINGS AND EVERYWHERE IN BETWEEN. WE SEE THE NEWSPAPER AS A POLITICAL ORGANIZER AND A MOBILIZING FORCE WHICH CONNECTS STRUGGLES AND URGES OPPRESSED PEOPLE TO, "THINK SOCIALLY AND ACT POLITICALLY".

In a world where the mainstream media is dominated by a narrow, corporate and anti-human agenda, Fire This Time represents an alternative that is intellectually honest and presents facts and analysis for those who are interested to know the truth and want to bring about a better world. This has included a special focus on Latin-America, and the revolutionary governments of Cuba, Venezuela and Bolivia, who continue to lead this struggle despite being under constant imperialist attack.

In the past year, Fire This Time has continued to amplify our distribution and ensure that the newspaper gets into the hands of new readers beyond BC, both nationally and internationally. We have sent writers to be on the ground participating and reporting from many important struggles for social and environmental justice. We have been everywhere from Standing Rock to London to the Dominican Republic and Cuba, from Seattle.

**"The truth must
not only be the
truth, it must be
told." - Fidel**

and Washington DC to Montreal, Calgary, Ottawa, Toronto, and more. We have brought first-hand reports from activities and conferences, on topics such as the war on Yemen and the Middle East, the struggle against the Dakota Access Pipeline, freedom for political prisoners in the U.S., as well as Venezuela and Cuba solidarity initiatives.

But now we really need your help!

IF YOU AGREE THAT THE NEWSPAPER IS UNIQUE AND IMPORTANT, WE ASK YOU TO MAKE A FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION, NO MATTER HOW SMALL (OR HOW LARGE!) TO ENABLE US TO CONTINUE PRINTING IN THE COMING YEAR. WE HAVE CALCULATED THAT WE WILL NEED A MINIMUM OF \$30,000 TO CONTINUE PUBLISHING AND DISTRIBUTING FIRE THIS TIME AS A FREE, MONTHLY, SOCIAL JUSTICE NEWSPAPER FOR 12 MONTHS IN 2017. WE HAVE LAUNCHED A CAMPAIGN TO RAISE THESE FUNDS BY MARCH 1ST, 2017 AND WE ARE REALLY COUNTING ON YOUR SUPPORT!

One time donations and monthly sustaining donations are gratefully accepted! Any donation of a total of \$250 or more will receive a bound volume of all 12 issues of next year's Fire This Time newspaper!

It's also important for you to know that you can pledge big or small donations to be paid over a period of time as well.



GOOD NEWS! DONATING IS EASY!

☀ Call 778-938-1557 or e-mail firethistimecanada@yandex.com to organize a donation, or;

☀ Write a cheque payable to "Nita Palmer". In the memo on the bottom please write "FTT 2017"

Mail the cheque to: PO Box 21607
Vancouver, BC V5L 5G3

☀ Donate via PayPal Online at www.firethistime.net



“Fidel, undefeated, has left us, but his spirit of struggle will permanently remain in the conscience of all revolutionaries”

Speech by Army General Raúl Castro Ruz, first secretary of the Communist Party of Cuba Central Committee and President of the Councils of State and Ministers, during the Eighth Period of Ordinary Sessions of the National Assembly of People's Power VIII Legislature, in Havana's International Conference Center, December 27, 2016, Year 58 of the Revolution

(Council of State transcript / GI translation)

Compañeras and compañeros:

Unlike previous sessions, on this occasion an evaluation of progress in the process of updating our socio-economic model was not conducted, taking into account that work continues on the proposed Conceptualization, and on the basic premises for the Social and Economic Development Plan through 2030, after concluding the thorough, democratic debate conducted with Party and youth organizations, representatives of mass organizations, and broad sectors of society, as mandated by the 7th Party Congress.

We hope that during the course of the first half of this coming year, the Central Committee Plenum will approve both

programmatic documents.

During the (National Assembly) ordinary session of December 2015, I warned that the performance of our economy in 2016 would face financial limitations as a result of a drop in revenue from exports, given reduced prices for the country's principle product lines, as well as the impact of changes in cooperation relations with other countries.

By July of the current year, these projections had been confirmed, about which I informed our people through this legislature. In fact, limitations in the supply of fuel and financial tensions worsened during the second half of the year, leading to a decrease in the Gross Domestic Product of 0.9%. Despite this, our free social services, such as education and public health for the entire population, were preserved. Our economy did not collapse, nor did the black-outs we experienced in the most difficult moments of the Special Period return, as more than a few international media outlets predicted.

At the same time, amidst this unfavorable conjuncture, the country continued to meet obligations agreed upon as part

of the restructuring of Cuba's foreign debt. Nevertheless, it has not been possible to overcome the temporary situation we face in regards to current payments owed suppliers. To address this, a series of measures were negotiated and implemented which will allow us to mitigate the panorama described.

I once again thank our commercial partners for their understanding and confidence in Cuba, and reiterate the government's intention to gradually re-establish normality in this important sphere, and lay the foundation to prevent its repetition in the future.

As we refer to the performance of the Cuban economy, the negative effects generated by the United States economic, commercial, financial blockade, which, as you know, remains in effect, cannot be forgotten. An example of this is that Cuba continues to be unable to conduct international transactions using the U.S. dollar, hampering progress in many important prospective business opportunities.

Nor can we ignore the extensive damage caused by the powerful Hurricane Matthew that struck, with unusual violence,



six municipalities in the far eastern region of the country, on October 4 and 5, of the current year, leaving a significant trail of destruction, affecting housing, schools, healthcare centers, warehouses, industrial and hotel facilities, as well as severe damage to highway, electrical, water supply and telecommunications infrastructure.

Fortunately, thanks to steps taken to protect the population, we were not obliged to mourn the loss of human life, as was sadly the case in other states located in the storm's path, including dozens of people within the very territory of the United States.

A much weaker hurricane comes to my mind, Flora, a category two, that on this date in 1963, 53 years ago, caused more than 1,200 human deaths. From that experience, several issues emerged, among them all the reservoirs we have - barely four or five existed in the country previously - and during this last hurricane, as I said, we didn't have a single death, not even a serious injury. We are working and will continue to do so.

I will take advantage of the occasion to offer thanks for the expressions of solidarity and material support we have received from many countries and international organizations in the United Nations system, contributing to

recovery efforts in this region. Deserving of special mention is the help provided by



the sister republic of Venezuela, on the initiative of its President, compañero Nicolás Maduro Moros.

In regards to the 2017 plan and budget, I must warn that that financial tensions and challenges persist, that may even wors-

en in some circumstances. Nevertheless, we project that the Cuban economy will retake an ascending path, and that the Gross Domestic product will grow modestly, around 2%.

Toward this end, three decisive premises must be respected. They are: guarantee the delivery of exports and their timely payment; increase national production to replace imports; and no less important, eliminate unnecessary expenses and use available resources rationally and efficiently. At the same time, amidst these difficulties, we will continue executing plans for investments directed toward the sustainable development of the national economy.

We afford great importance to the need to increase foreign investment in Cuba, in accordance with Guide-

line no.78 of the Economic and Social Policy of the Party and the Revolution, approved by the 7th Congress.

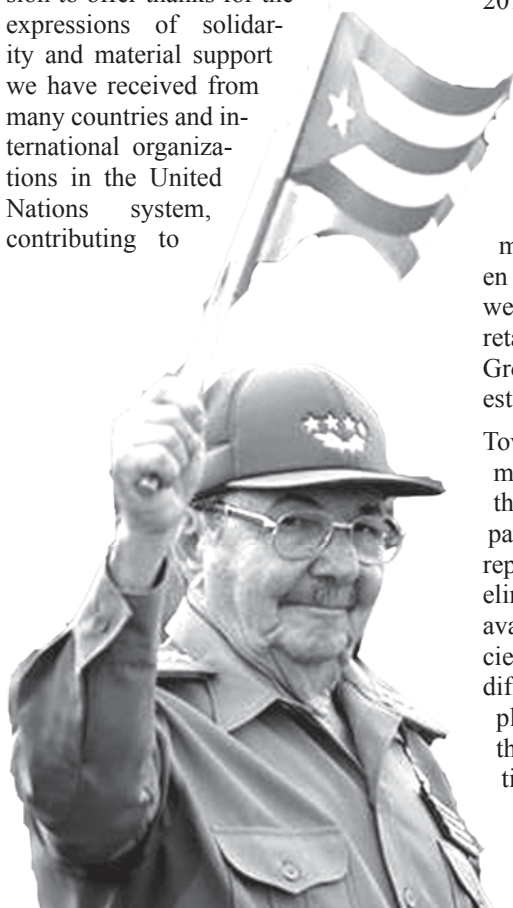
I acknowledge that we are not satisfied in this area, and that there have been frequent, excessive delays in the negotiating process. It is necessary to overcome, once and for all, the obsolete mentality of prejudices toward foreign investment.

To advance resolutely in this direction, we must rid ourselves of unfounded fears of foreign capital; We are not heading toward, nor will we head



toward capitalism, this is totally ruled out, as is established in our Constitution, and will be maintained, but we should not be afraid, and erect obstacles to what we can do within the framework of existing law. This requires, in the first place, assuring the systematic preparation and training of cadre and specialists to negotiate, as well as analyzing deficiencies and mistakes made in the past, to never again repeat them.

As is known, this small island does not produce all the fuel it needs, having to import a considerable amount, the cost of which hangs like the sword of Damocles over our economy. Without renouncing an increase in the national production of oil, for which we need investors, we must accelerate the development of renewable energy resources, which currently only



account for 4.65% of the electricity we generate.

We have more than adequate conditions for this in terms of solar, or photovoltaic, energy, eolic and biomass. This is one of the strategic sectors in which we must decisively strengthen foreign investment.

Precisely these last two issues, which I am addressing, were also discussed in the last Council of Ministers meeting, a few days ago, along with maintaining, I said, the figure of 24%, to which we aspire in the Plan through 2030 - but, really, work to surpass this by that date.

Moving on to another subject, this morning the Assembly agreed to continue working, until the conclusion of the current legislature in 2018, on the experiment being conducted in the provinces of Artemisa and Mayabeque, directed toward separating the leadership of the Administrative Councils from that of the Provincial and Municipal Assemblies of People's Power.

This experiment, which has been underway for five years now, coinciding with the creation of the two provinces, has allowed for the implementation of a series of organizational and functional principles regarding government bodies, permitting local People's Power assemblies to increase attention to People's Councils, constituency delegates, and the population in general.

Likewise, it was possible to separate state functions from those of local enterprises, creating at a provincial level, a system of entities providing services to the people.



Raul Castro visiting Maisí, Guantánamo after it was hit by Hurricane Matthew

All of this has helped significantly reduce staff and cadre rosters across management structures in provinces and municipalities.

Nonetheless, a number of shortcomings emerged which, without undermining the essential concepts of the experiment, prevented the consolidation of the management model implemented, so as to ensure its successful generalization across the rest of the country at a later date.

One of the main factors identified is the high level of instability of cadres in these bodies, as well as the inadequate completion of staff rosters, as a result of miscalculating the selection, training, and oversight of personnel. To this must be added

insufficient attention and supervision by national entities and bodies to the experimentation process, thus delaying the implementation of the decisions adopted.

I believe that the errors have been identified and that the decision to extend the experiment is correct. Now, it is up to all of us and the Permanent Commission for Implementation and Development, in particular, together with Party structures in different bodies, to overcome these and advance, without delay, toward its completion in the new timeframe prescribed.

From the beginning, it was genuinely thought to be an easy task, and life is showing us that there is no easy task in this area, and that all the agreements to perfect the experiment are full of difficult tasks. Nothing is easy, we must dedicate the necessary time to everything, while none of these tasks can be successfully completed with superficialities and much less by addressing them every now and then.

Compañeras and compañeros:

In my remarks on December 3, in the Mayor General Antonio Maceo Grajales Plaza de la Revolución, in Santiago de Cuba, I announced the historic leader of the Cuban Revolution Fidel Castro Ruz's wish that his name and likeness never be used to denote institutions, squares, parks,





avenues, streets, or other public sites, and that neither busts, statues or other similar forms of tribute be erected in his memory.

Today, our parliament has enshrined compañero Fidel's last wishes in law.

The historic leader of the Cuban Revolution left us his enduring example, his unwavering optimism, and confidence in victory.

I believe, and just as compañero Lazo remarked at the opening of this session, that the best monument to his ideas and work is to bring to life, every day, the postulates contained within his outstanding definition of the concept of Revolution, which he made public on May 1, 2000, and was signed by millions of Cubans in the context of activities organized to pay well-deserved tribute to a man who never betrayed his people, and just as he expressed in the premonitory speech he delivered on January 8, 1959 – on arrival to the capital, at the military camp formerly known as Columbia, now Ciudad Libertad – today almost 58 years ago, when the Caravan of Liberty triumphantly entered Havana – having left me in charge of the eastern province in Santiago de Cuba, at that time the capital of what are today the five eastern provinces, I watched his speech on television that evening. The older ones will remember what it was like, very moving; with the white doves perched on his shoulders, etcetera. I don't clearly recall what I am going to read to you, but I do remember how it began: "The feeling of joy is immense. And yet, there still remains much to be done. We won't deceive ourselves by believing that everything will be much

easier from now on; perhaps it will be much more difficult."

I didn't remember however, quite as clearly, this other quote that I am going to read, and before sharing it here, I looked for the recording, as well as what had been written, and this is how it goes. He said at that time, and I quote: "I know that we will never again witness such a crowd in our lifetime" – referring to his welcome here in Havana and throughout the entire journey – "except at another time when, I am sure that the crowds will gather once again. The day we die, because when they must take us to our graves, that day, as many people as today will come together once again, because we will never betray our people!" End of quote (Applause).

Fidel, undefeated, has left us, but his spirit of struggle will permanently remain in the conscience of all Cuban revolutionaries of today, tomorrow and forever, and we will show this in the Military Parade and march of the combative people this coming January 2, on the 60th anniversary of the heroic uprising in Santiago de Cuba, the landing of the Granma expeditionaries, Revolutionary Armed Forces Day, in honor of the Comandante en Jefe of the Cuban Revolution and our youth.

I have left to say only that, in a few days, we will celebrate one more anniversary of the triumph of the Revolution and the advent of the New Year. We extend to our dear Cuban people our warmest congratulations.

That is all (Applause).

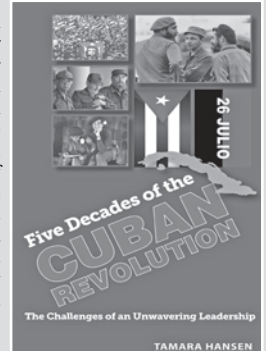
Battle of Ideas Press

5 Decades of the Cuban Revolution The Challenges of an Unwavering Leadership

By Tamara Hansen

"The battles Cuba has fought have not been easy. Some were physical battles, such as the battle against bandits in the Escambray Mountains or the Bay of Pigs invasion. However, most were not battles of physical might, but battles of ideas. But with every twist and turn, every up and down Fidel has been one of the first leaders to say, 'this way forward' or 'we made a wrong turn, we must change course.'"

Tamara Hansen is the coordinator of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC). She is also an editorial board member of The Fire This Time newspaper. She has travelled to Cuba ten times and has written extensively on Cuban politics since 2003.



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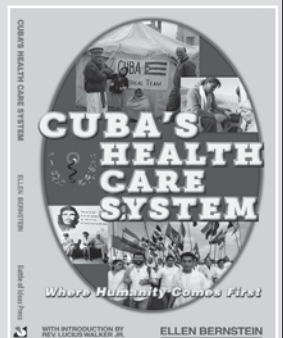
CUBA'S HEALTH CARE SYSTEM WHERE HUMANITY COMES FIRST

BY ELLEN BERNSTEIN

"The unfailing dedication of Cuban health care professionals has led to dramatic improvements in quality of life, for millions of people who previously had no other hope of receiving decent medical care. IFCO/Pastors for Peace is pleased to honor the diligent health care professionals of the Cuban health care system. We especially pay tribute to Cuba's national leadership, whose vision of universal health care as a right of every citizen sets an example for the world."

Ellen Bernstein has served as Associate Director of the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization (IFCO) since 2003.

She has been a key staff member of IFCO's project Pastors for Peace, and has been deeply and integrally involved in IFCO's historic work with Cuba.



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“Fidel se marchó invicto, pero su espíritu de lucha permanecerá en la conciencia de todos los revolucionarios Cubanos”

* EN ESPAÑOL *

Discurso pronunciado por el General de Ejército Raúl Castro Ruz, Primer Secretario del Comité Central del Partido Comunista de Cuba y Presidente de los Consejos de Estado y de Ministros, en la clausura del Octavo Período Ordinario de Sesiones de la Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular en la VIII Legislatura, en el Palacio de Convenciones, el 27 de diciembre de 2016, “Año 58 de la Revolución”.

(Versiones Taquigráficas-Consejo de Estado)

Compañeras y compañeros:

Los días finales del año, como ya es habitual, se han caracterizado por una intensa actividad. El pasado sábado efectuamos la reunión del Consejo de Ministros que aprobó presentar a esta Asamblea el Plan de la Economía y el proyecto de Presupuesto para el año 2017, que analizamos en el día de hoy.

A diferencia de sesiones anteriores, no se realizó en esta ocasión la evaluación de la marcha del proceso de actualización del Modelo Económico y Social, teniendo en cuenta que se continúa trabajando en la propuesta de su Conceptualización, así como en las bases del Plan de Desarrollo Económico y Social hasta el año 2030, luego de concluir, por mandato del Séptimo Congreso del Partido, el profundo y democrático debate llevado a cabo con las organizaciones del Partido y la Juventud, representantes de las organizaciones de masas y de amplios sectores de la

sociedad.

Esperamos que en el transcurso del primer semestre del próximo año, el Pleno del Comité Central apruebe ambos documentos programáticos.

En la sesión ordinaria de diciembre de 2015 advertí que el desempeño de nuestra economía en el año 2016 enfrentaría limitaciones

financieras a causa de la caída en los ingresos de las exportaciones por la disminución de los precios de los principales rubros, así como afectaciones en las relaciones de cooperación con otros países.

Ya en julio del presente año los hechos confirmaron esas proyecciones, sobre lo cual informé a nuestro pueblo desde este Parlamento. Ciertamente, las limitaciones en los suministros de combustibles y las tensiones financieras se agravaron en el segundo semestre, conduciendo al decrecimiento del Producto Interno Bruto en un 0,9%. A pesar de ello se preservaron los servicios sociales gratuitos, como la educación y la salud pública a toda la población. No se produjo el colapso de nuestra economía ni el regreso de los apagones que padecimos en los momentos más difíciles del período especial, como



auguraban no pocos malintencionados medios internacionales de prensa.

Asimismo, en medio de este desfavorable escenario se mantuvo el cumplimiento estricto de las obligaciones contraídas como resultado del reordenamiento de la deuda externa cubana. Sin embargo, no ha sido posible superar la situación transitoria que atravesamos en los atrasos de los pagos corrientes a los proveedores, con cuyo fin se ejecutaron y realizan un conjunto de gestiones que permitirán aliviar el panorama descrito.

Agradezco, una vez más, a los socios comerciales por su comprensión y confianza hacia Cuba y reitero la voluntad del gobierno de restablecer paulatinamente la normalidad en esta importante esfera y sentar las bases para evitar su repetición en el futuro.

Al referirnos al desempeño de la economía cubana, no se pueden olvidar los efectos



La caravana con las cenizas de Fidel Castro desde Havana hacia Santiago

negativos que nos genera el bloqueo económico, comercial y financiero de Estados Unidos que, como ustedes conocen, se mantiene en vigor. Ejemplo de ello es que Cuba sigue sin poder realizar transacciones internacionales en dólares estadounidenses, lo que impide llevar hacia adelante muchos e importantes negocios en perspectiva.

Tampoco deben omitirse los cuantiosos daños que ocasionó el peligroso huracán Matthew que se abatió con inusual virulencia sobre seis municipios del extremo este del país, los días 4 y 5 de octubre del presente año, con un saldo significativo de destrucción de viviendas, centros educacionales y de salud, almacenes, instalaciones industriales y hoteleras, así como severas afectaciones a la infraestructura vial, eléctrica, hidráulica y de telecomunicaciones.

Afortunadamente, gracias a las medidas adoptadas para la protección de la población, no tuvimos que lamentar ninguna pérdida de vida humana, como por desgracia sucedió en los demás Estados ubicados en la ruta de este fenómeno meteorológico, incluyendo varias decenas en el propio territorio de Estados Unidos.

A la memoria me viene que un huracán mucho más débil que ese, de categoría dos, un día como ese, pero en 1963, hace unos 53 años, el Flora, nos ocasionó más de 1 200 bajas humanas. De ahí surgieron varias cuestiones, entre ellas todas las presas que tenemos, que antes apenas existían cuatro o cinco presas en el país, y en este último huracán, como ya les dije, no tuvimos ni una sola baja, ni siquiera un herido grave. Se sigue trabajando y continuaremos.

Aprovecho la ocasión para agradecer las muestras de solidaridad y el apoyo material que hemos recibido de muchos países y de las organizaciones internacionales del sistema de Naciones Unidas para contribuir a la recuperación de esos territorios. Mención especial

merece la ayuda proporcionada por la hermana República Venezolana a iniciativa de su presidente, el compañero Nicolás Maduro Moros.

En cuanto al plan y el presupuesto para el 2017 debo alertar que persistirán tensiones financieras y retos que pudieran incluso recrudecerse en determinadas circunstancias; sin embargo, prevemos que la economía cubana retome la senda ascendente y que el Producto Interno Bruto crezca moderadamente en el entorno del 2%.

Con ese propósito deberán cumplirse tres premisas decisivas, que son: garantizar las exportaciones y su cobro oportuno; incrementar la producción nacional que sustituye importaciones; y no

menos importante, reducir todo gasto no imprescindible y utilizar racional y eficientemente los recursos disponibles. Al propio tiempo, en medio de las dificultades, continuaremos ejecutando los programas de inversiones en función del desarrollo sostenible de la economía nacional.

Concedemos gran importancia a la necesidad de dinamizar la inversión extranjera en Cuba, en correspondencia con el Lineamiento No.78 de la Política Económica y Social del Partido y la Revolución, aprobado en el Séptimo Congreso.

Reconozco que no estamos satisfechos en esta esfera y que han sido frecuentes las dilaciones excesivas del proceso negociador. Es preciso superar de una vez y por siempre la mentalidad obsoleta llena de prejuicios contra la inversión foránea.

Para avanzar resueltamente en esta dirección d e b e m o s despojarnos de falsos temores hacia el capital externo; no vamos ni iremos al capitalismo, eso está

totalmente descartado, así lo recoge nuestra Constitución y lo mantendrá, pero no debemos cogerle miedo y ponerle trabas a lo que podemos hacer en el marco de las leyes vigentes. Ello requiere, en primer lugar, asegurar la preparación y capacitación sistemática de los cuadros y especialistas que negocian, así como profundizar en las deficiencias y errores cometidos en el pasado para nunca más repetirlos.

Como es sabido, esta pequeña isla no produce todo el combustible que necesita, debiendo importar volúmenes considerables, cuyo costo pende como espada de Damocles sobre nuestra economía. Sin renunciar al incremento de la producción nacional de petróleo, para lo cual también se necesitan inversiones, debemos acelerar el desarrollo de las Fuentes Renovables de Energía, que actualmente sólo significan un 4,65% de



la generación de electricidad.

Condiciones para ello tenemos más que suficientes en las energías solar o fotovoltaica, eólica y la biomasa. Este es uno de los sectores estratégicos donde debemos potenciar decididamente la inversión extranjera.

Precisamente estos dos últimos temas que estoy tocando, fueron temas que también abordamos en la última reunión del Consejo de Ministros hace unos pocos días, y mantener —les decía— la cifra del 24% a la que se aspira, según el Plan hasta el año 2030; pero, realmente, trabajar por superarla para esa fecha.

Pasando a otro asunto. En la mañana de hoy, esta Asamblea acordó continuar trabajando hasta la conclusión de la actual Legislatura en el año 2018, en el experimento que se aplica en las provincias de Artemisa y Mayabeque, en interés de separar la dirección de los consejos de la administración de las asambleas provinciales y municipales del Poder Popular.

El mencionado experimento, que se ejecuta desde hace un quinquenio, coincidiendo con la creación de ambas provincias, ha permitido poner en práctica un conjunto de principios organizativos y de funcionamiento de los órganos de gobierno, permitiendo que las asambleas locales del Poder Popular incrementen la atención a los consejos populares, los delegados de circunscripción y la población en general.

Igualmente, se logró deslindar las funciones estatales de las empresariales

en el ámbito local, conformándose a nivel de esas provincias un sistema de empresas para prestar servicios al pueblo. Todo ello ha facilitado reducir de manera sensible las plantillas de funcionarios y cuadros de las estructuras de dirección en provincias y municipios.

No obstante, se pusieron de manifiesto un conjunto de deficiencias que, sin invalidar los conceptos esenciales del experimento, impidieron la consolidación del modelo de gestión puesto en práctica, de modo que su ulterior generalización al resto del país constituya un éxito.

Uno de los principales factores detectados es el elevado nivel de fluctuación de los cuadros en esas instancias, así como el insuficiente completamiento de las plantillas, a consecuencia de subestimar la selección, preparación y control del personal. A ello se suma la insuficiente atención y supervisión por los organismos y entidades nacionales al proceso de experimentación, retrasándose la implementación de las decisiones adoptadas.

Considero que los errores han sido identificados y que es adecuada la



decisión de prorrogar el experimento. Ahora lo que nos corresponde a todos y en especial a la Comisión Permanente para la Implementación y Desarrollo, de conjunto con las estructuras del Partido en las diferentes instancias, es superarlos y avanzar, sin retrocesos, en su culminación en el nuevo plazo concedido.

Realmente se estimó, desde el principio, que era una tarea fácil, y la vida nos está demostrando que no hay tarea fácil en este terreno y que de tareas difíciles están llenos todos los acuerdos para el perfeccionamiento. Nada es fácil, a todo hay que dedicarle el tiempo que requiere y ninguna de esas tareas puede realizarse exitosamente con superficialidades y mucho menos atendíendolas de vez en cuando.

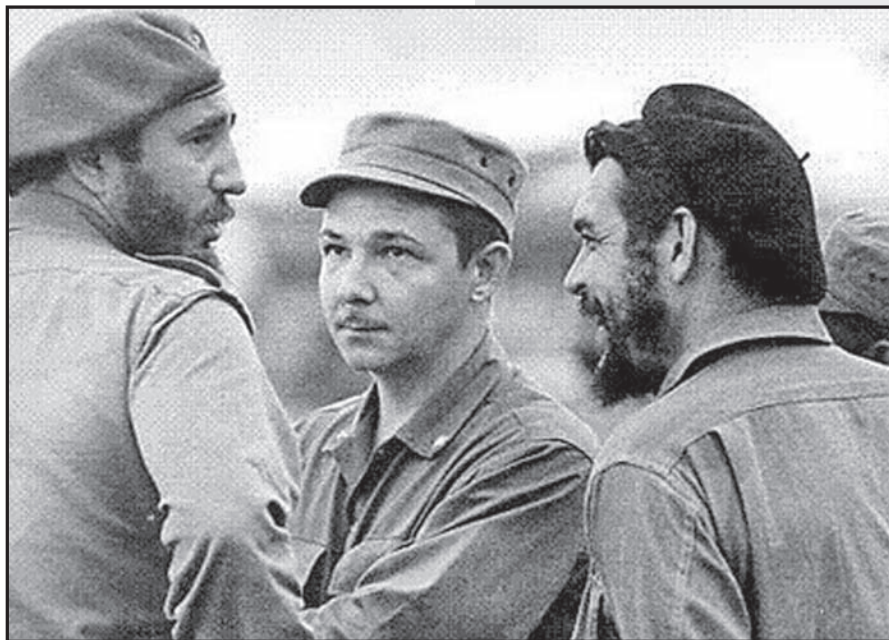
Compañeras y compañeros:

En mis palabras el 3 de diciembre, en la Plaza de la Revolución Mayor General Antonio Maceo Grajales, en Santiago de Cuba, anuncié la voluntad del líder histórico de la Revolución Cubana, Fidel Castro Ruz, de que su nombre y su figura nunca fueran utilizados para denominar instituciones, plazas, parques, avenidas, calles u otros sitios públicos, ni erigir en su memoria monumentos, bustos, estatuas y otras formas similares de tributo.

En el día de hoy nuestro Parlamento ha consagrado en Ley la voluntad expresada por el compañero Fidel hasta las últimas horas de vida.

El líder histórico de la Revolución Cubana nos legó su ejemplo imperecedero, su irrenunciable optimismo y fe en la victoria.

En mi opinión, y de modo similar a lo





manifestado por el compañero Lazo en la apertura de esta sesión, el mejor monumento a sus ideales y obra es hacer realidad cada día los postulados contenidos en su brillante definición del concepto de Revolución, que hizo público el 1ro. de mayo del 2000, y que millones de cubanos suscribimos en el marco de las actividades organizadas para rendirle el merecido homenaje a quien nunca defraudó a su pueblo, y tal como expresó en el premonitorio discurso que pronunció el 8 de Enero de 1959 — al llegar a la capital, en el campamento militar conocido por Columbia, hoy Ciudad Libertad—, hace hoy casi 58 años, cuando la Caravana de la Libertad entró triunfal en La Habana —como a mí me dejó de jefe en la provincia oriental, en Santiago de Cuba, como capital entonces de las hoy cinco provincias orientales, vi este discurso por televisión, ya de noche, los que tienen más edad recordarán cómo fue, muy emotivo, hasta las palomas blancas que se le posaron en los hombros, etcétera, yo no recordaba bien esto que les voy a leer, sí recuerdo cómo empezó: “La alegría es inmensa, pero queda mucho por hacer todavía... no nos imaginemos que desde ahora todo será más fácil, tal vez desde ahora todo sea más difícil.”

Pero de esta otra que les leeré no la recordaba con esa claridad, y antes de expresarlo aquí busqué la grabación, además de lo que estaba escrito, y está textualmente así. Dice en aquel momento, cito:

“Sé que nunca más en nuestras vidas volveremos a presenciar una

muchedumbre semejante” —se está refiriendo al recibimiento aquí en La Habana y en todo el recorrido—, “excepto en otra ocasión —en que estoy seguro de que se van a volver a reunir las muchedumbres—, y es el día en que muramos, porque nosotros, cuando nos tengan que llevar a la tumba, ese día, se volverá a reunir tanta gente como hoy, porque nosotros ¡jamás defraudaremos a nuestro pueblo!” Fin de la cita (Aplausos).

Fidel se marchó invicto, pero su espíritu de lucha permanecerá en la conciencia de todos los revolucionarios cubanos, de hoy, de mañana y de siempre, y así lo demostraremos en la Revista Militar y marcha del pueblo combatiente el próximo 2 de enero, en ocasión del 60 aniversario de la heroica sublevación en Santiago de Cuba y del Desembarco de los expedicionarios del Granma, Día de las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias, en homenaje al Comandante en Jefe de la Revolución Cubana y a nuestra juventud.

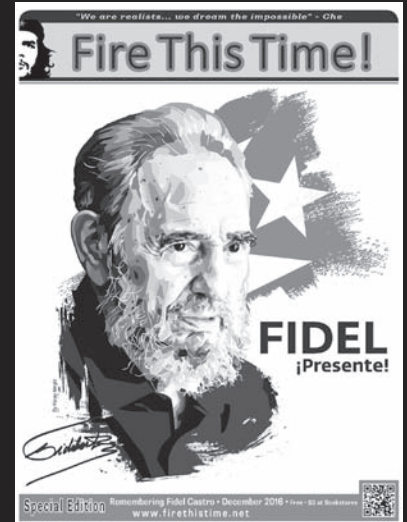
Ya solo me resta expresarles que en pocos días, festejaremos un aniversario más del triunfo de la Revolución y el advenimiento del nuevo año. Llegue al querido pueblo de Cuba nuestras calurosas felicitaciones.

Eso es todo (Aplausos).



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Here's the deal: Through Bill C-51 and other "national security" initiatives the Canadian government, police and spy agencies are trying to impose more access to our privation information, as well as demanding more power to override our human rights and basic freedoms. All of this with more secrecy and less accountability. At the same time, 2016 saw scandal after scandal continue to show how they cannot be trusted. Here's the top 6 scandals of 2016, which are 6 more reasons we need to continue to demand a full repeal of Bill C-51.

① **Multimillion Dollar Police Entrapment of "Domestic Terrorists"**

After 37 months of imprisonment John Nutall and Amanda Korody walked free when their terrorism conviction was overturned in July. The British Columbia Supreme Court found them to be victims of a police entrapment.

The couple were found guilty by a jury last year for planting inert pressure cooker bombs on the B.C. legislature grounds in 2013, under the direction of an undercover RCMP officer who acted as their leader and facilitator. Nutall and Korody were both vulnerable recovering drug addicts living on social assistance when the RCMP moved in on them. The entire operation to entrap them involved over 240 officers who billed almost a million dollars in overtime alone over 5 months.

② **Secret Storage of Illegal Information on Thousands**

In November, a federal court found that Canada's spy agency CSIS had used a huge and secretive data collection facility, the Operational Data Analysis Centre, to run unauthorized advanced data analytics to aid in its investigations. The court found that the database contained potentially massive amounts of data on innocent people who never under investigation - data which CSIS should have destroyed. What's more, CSIS now claims it is "unable to locate any records" of briefings or notes on the centre's operations and its communication with the government regarding them.

WE CANNOT TRUST THEM

Bill C-51 and the Top 6 "National Security" Scandals of 2016

③ **Police and Spy Agencies Continue Spying on Journalists**

This December CSIS backtracked on its promise to reveal to a Senate committee how many Canadian journalists it spied on in the past, citing "operational security." In Quebec, provincial police finally admitted they had obtained five years of call logs from at least six french language journalists in an attempt to discover their sources, and Montreal police also admitted it had secretly tracked another reporter.

④ **Unregulated Use of Stingrays**

Stingray devices trick nearby cellphones into connecting to their wireless network. Once they are connected, the Stingray user can collect information transmitted by the phone, including

its location, data transmissions, texts, emails and voice conversations. The RCMP, Vancouver Police Department and the Ontario Provincial Police had all refused to confirm or deny whether they use Stingray devices despite years of constant requests and campaigns by civil liberties groups. In August of 2016 the Vancouver Police Department finally admitted to using a Stingray device, and that they would use them again.

This follows the revelation by a top secret document released by former U.S. spy agency contractor turned whistle-blower Edward Snowden that Canada's electronic spy agency, the Communications Security Establishment Canada (CSEC), secretly and illegally used information from the free internet service at the Toronto Pearson airport to track the wireless devices of thousands of innocent airline passengers for days after they left the airport.

⑤ **Head of Canadian Spy Watchdog Calls for the Death of Whistle-blower Edward Snowden**

This December, Michael Doucet, a former Canadian intelligence analyst, called for the death of Edward Snowden saying, "If Edward Snowden had worked for CSIS and did what he did, he should be shot." What makes this so concerning is that he is the current executive director of a government watchdog agency, the Security Intelligence Review Committee. The SIRC reviews the highly classified operations of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS). Extrajudicial executions! What kind of position is that to have for someone who is supposedly in charge of preventing





spy agency misconduct?

⑥ Years of Secret Government Spying Finally Revealed

Historian Dennis Molinaro of Trent University has found documents detailing the RCMP's secret Cold War wiretapping program. They show police surveillance on suspected Soviet spies, communist sympathizers and "subversives," including gays and lesbians working in the public service, who were thought to be vulnerable to blackmail.

The original secret order was approved in 1951 by the cabinet of Prime Minister Louis St-Laurent, during the Korean War. Details of the program were withheld from the public, the courts and members of Parliament. Molinaro thinks the program lasted through to the 1970's, although government officials still refuse to release the 65 year old secret order, or even confirm it exists.

Bill C-51 and the Sham "Public Consultation"

Despite each of these scandals being a huge deal in their own right, the biggest scandal of 2016 was the Liberal government's continued use of Bill C-51 despite election campaign promises to respect our rights. Under Bill C-51 17 government agencies are sharing our personal information without accountability, CSIS is using its new undefined powers of "disruption" and the RCMP continues to detain people and threaten them into signing "peace bonds" which severely limit their freedoms. All of these without any real public knowledge or input, as Bill C-51 doesn't require any.

The Liberals promised national security oversight committee turned out to be a toothless and unelected group whose access to the information it can obtain or reveal is controlled by the Prime Minister's Office. The belated "public consultation" about Bill C-51 and

WORKING GROUP TO STOP BILL C-51 NEARS 100th WEEKLY ACTION

By Thomas Davies

The Canadian government's phony "public consultation" on Bill C-51 and national security came to a close on December 1st with neither a bang or a whimper. In stark contrast, the Working Group to Stop Bill C-51 continued its almost 2 year long campaign of dynamic weekly actions demanding a full repeal of the controversial law.

With the winter sun setting at the same time as the start time for the weekly actions, the Working Group got to work and made new bright lit signs saying, "REPEAL BILL C-51!" and "HONK". It was a new and very effective way of getting the attention of passersby.

December included a banner drop in New Westminster and two busy pickets at skytrain stations in Vancouver. This led up to the 95th weekly action, a "Boxing Day Blitz Against Bill C-51" on December 26th. Time and time again, the public response to the petition calling for a full repeal of Bill C-51 confirms the importance of continuing the campaign. Especially when the Liberal government shows no real signs of following through on its election promises of respecting human and democratic rights.

Leading into 2017, the Working Group to Stop Bill C-51 is working up to 100th Weekly Action and will continue to organize until Bill C-51 joins many other unjust laws which have been defeated by the consistent and committed organizing of poor and working people defending their rights.

REPEAL BILL C-51 NOW!



national security turned out to be more of an introduction by the government of the new measures they are trying to impose to store all of our Internet usage data!

Most importantly, poor and working people continue to live under the shadow of Bill C-51 and the threat it represents to our rights, and our right to organize. Legal experts have stated that Bill C-51's vague language targeting those who support "terrorism in general" or who "interfere with the economic or financial stability of Canada" mean that basically anyone can be targeted. Especially those critical of government policies.

The government continues to say, "Don't worry, you can trust us." This year's scandals say completely the opposite! Poor and working people need to continue educating, organizing and mobilizing for a full repeal of Bill C-51. Our rights were won by organizing around our common demands, and we must defend them together as well.

REPEAL BILL C-51!
CALL FOR AN INDEPENDENT
PUBLIC INQUIRY!
OUR SECURITY LIES IN DEFENDING
THE RIGHTS OF ALL!

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Comandante Fidel: Combatant to the End



By Dr. Helen Yaffe*

It could have been the armed struggle, terrorism, assassination or the serious illness which, at his own admission, nearly killed him in 2006; but in the end Fidel Castro lived through it all to die in peace.

His death, at 90, on Nov. 25, 2016, has dominated news around the world. In Cuba, there will be several days of mourning, a procession through the island, and funeral on 4 December. Most Cubans on the island will mourn Fidel and pay their respects. Somewhere, rising up through their grief will be a sense of pride; that nature took el Comandante, and not the enemy. It must have been a source of comfort for Cuba's Commander in Chief. He was a man that led the call to arms from the front: against Batista's dictatorship, against US imperialism, against the "Batistiano" - the former Cuban elite who never ceased plotting their inglorious return to power, a group he labelled "worms" (gusanos). Right up to his scathing reflection about "brother Obama" following the U.S. president's visit to Cuba early this year, Fidel never stopped fighting for the sovereign, independent and socialist Cuba he pledged to build.

Trained as a lawyer and tested as a soldier, Fidel's genius was his ability to meet the need for tactical steps, responding to the day's urgencies, without losing sight of the strategic direction. Dismissing him as a "dictator" censors a rich history of debate, experimentation, and collective learning that has taken place in Cuba under Fidel's guidance.

In the 1950s, Fidel set out the Moncada Program, which committed to bring social welfare and land reform to the Cuban people, and confiscate the ill-gotten gains of the Cuban elite. This was his promise to the Cuban people, who came out in their masses to cheer Fidel on the long road to Havana in the first days of 1959. And in this, clearly, Fidel has been absolved by history. Also in those first years, one million Cubans left the island, most of them for the United States where they formed a pocket of violent opposition to Fidel and the Cuban Revolution. Who were they? They were the landowners, the businessmen, the politicians, who surpassed even previously shocking standards of graft and corruption. They fled the island, temporarily they thought. However, despite the financial, military, political and ideological support they received

from successive U.S. administrations and state institutions, the Revolution could not be dislodged: not through mercenary invasions, sabotage, terrorism or biological warfare, not through the threat of nuclear war, not through regional and international isolation, not through the U.S. blockade, not through inducements, nor corruption, nor assassinations.

It is these Cuban exiles, and their allies, who have dominated U.S. policy-making on Cuba - converting Cuba into a domestic political issue. They have established the paradigm for academic writing and commentary on Cuba, controlled the media narrative, and in general obstructed our ability to understand Cuba as a country, Fidel as a man, and socialism as an alternative development strategy. So none of us should be surprised that on his death, unlike Mandela, Fidel is not forgiven his "crimes," but continues to be lambasted as a dictator, supposedly the oppressor of an entire nation.

Elsewhere, however and well beyond the shores of Cuba, millions in the world will mourn a leader they claimed as their own. The leader of a revolution which defeated a U.S.-backed invasion,

who stood up to U.S. imperialism, who sent doctors, educators and development workers to the poorest regions on the earth – almost as soon as they were trained up for free in Cuba. In the 1960s, Fidel railed against imperialism and colonialism in the United Nations, supported revolutionary movements in Latin America, Africa and elsewhere, and hosted the Tricontinental Conference to coordinate anti-imperialist forces internationally. From the 1970s Fidel sent the first of some 400,000 Cubans to defend Angola from the colonial aspirations of apartheid South Africa. In the 1980s Fidel condemned third world debt as unpayable. In the 1990s he denounced the devastating human costs of neoliberalism and warned the world about the ecological crisis which threatened humanity and the planet. In the 2000s he opened the doors of the Latin American School of Medicine (set up in 1999) to poor students from Africa, Asia and elsewhere, so that they too could study for free and return to serve their poor communities, and the Battle of Ideas he led showed what could be achieved in the field of culture and education.

Cuba today, is incomparable with the Cuba of 1959; just consider the island's achievements in health, medicine, biotechnology, culture, art, sport, and combatting discrimination of every kind. They have built a new and alternative system of democracy, without political



Cuban sign reads "I am Cuba, I am Fidel, I am Revolution"

parties, and political celebrities, in which politics is not a career, and principles are not invented by publicists responding to the latest polls. Yes, there have been mistakes and shameful episodes. But Fidel's strongest serious critic was always himself, just listen to his interviews with Ignacio Ramonet and Oliver Stone.

One thing we can assert is that Fidel stuck to his principles. A recent book by William LeoGrande and Peter Kornbluh on the secret history of negotiations between Washington and Havana documents that almost as soon as diplomatic relations were broken, their respective governments pursued avenues to restore or improve them. What is also clear, however, is that at various

moments in history Fidel rejected an offer to reduce hostilities, to lift the U.S. blockade for example, because they were pre-conditioned on abandoning some anti-imperialist (or in the case of Angola, anti-racist) internationalist cause: withdrawing troops from Southern Africa, stopping vociferous support for Puerto Rican independence, ending support for the Central America revolutionary movements, and cutting off ties to the Soviet Union. These were demands that Fidel would not countenance. Commitment to international anti-imperialism could not be traded. "Men make their own history," observed Karl Marx, "but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past."

Fidel has made history, and history has absolved him, even as, in his death, those ideological enemies continue to rage against his life.

Students of Havana University pay tribute to Fidel as they march to Revolution Square in Havana on Nov. 28, 2016.



**Dr. Helen Yaffe is the author of Che Guevara: The Economics of Revolution (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) and a specialist on Cuban and Latin American economic history. She is a Fellow in the Economic History Department at the London School of Economics. Helen has spent several years living and researching in Cuba.*

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ZIONIST LOGIC

By Malcolm X in 1964

The Zionist armies that now occupy Palestine claim their ancient Jewish prophets predicted that in the "last days of this world" their own God would raise them up a "messiah" who would lead them to their promised land, and they would set up their own "divine" government in this newly-gained land, this "divine" government would enable them to "rule all other nations with a rod of iron."

If the Israeli Zionists believe their present occupation of Arab Palestine is the fulfillment of predictions made by their Jewish prophets, then they also religiously believe that Israel must fulfill its "divine" mission to rule all other nations with a rod of irons, which only means a different form of iron-like rule, more firmly entrenched even, than that of the former European Colonial Powers.

These Israeli Zionists religiously believe their Jewish God has chosen them to replace the outdated European colonialism with a new form of colonialism, so well disguised that it will enable them to deceive the African masses into submitting willingly to their "divine" authority and guidance, without the African masses being aware that they are still colonized.

Camouflage

The Israeli Zionists are convinced they have successfully camouflaged their new kind of colonialism. Their colonialism appears to be more "benevolent," more "philanthropic," a

system with which they rule simply by getting their potential victims to accept their friendly offers of economic "aid," and other tempting gifts, that they dangle in front of the newly-independent African nations, whose economies are experiencing great difficulties. During the 19th century, when the masses here in Africa were largely illiterate it was easy for European imperialists to rule them with "force and fear," but in this present era of enlightenment the African masses are awakening, and it is impossible to hold them in check now with the antiquated methods of the 19th century.

The imperialists, therefore, have been compelled to devise new methods. Since they can no longer force or frighten the masses into submission, they must devise modern methods that will enable them to maneuver the African masses into willing submission.

The modern 20th century weapon of neo-imperialism is "dollarism." The Zionists have mastered the science of dollarism: the ability to come posing as a friend and benefactor, bearing gifts and all other forms of economic aid and offers of technical assistance. Thus, the power and influence of Zionist Israel in many of the newly "independent" African nations has fast-become even more unshakeable than that of the 18th century European colonialists...and this new kind of Zionist colonialism differs only in form and method, but never in motive or objective.

At the close of the 19th century when European imperialists wisely foresaw that the awakening masses of Africa would not submit to their old method of ruling through force and fears, these ever-scheming imperialists had to create a "new weapon," and to find a "new base" for that weapon.

Dollarism

The number one weapon of 20th century imperialism is Zionist dollarism, and one of the main bases for this weapon is Zionist Israel. The ever-scheming European imperialists wisely placed Israel where she could geographically divide the Arab world, infiltrate and sow the seed of dissension among African leaders and also divide the Africans against the Asians.

Zionist Israel's occupation of Arab Palestine has forced the Arab world to waste billions of precious dollars on armaments, making it impossible for these newly independent Arab nations to concentrate on strengthening the economies of their countries and elevate the living standard of their people.

And the continued low standard of living in the Arab world has been skillfully used by the Zionist propagandists to make it appear to the Africans that the Arab leaders are not intellectually or technically qualified to lift the living standard of their people...thus, indirectly inducing Africans to turn away from the Arabs and towards the Israelis for teachers and technical assistance.

They cripple the bird's wing, and then condemn it for not flying as fast as they.

The imperialists always make themselves look good, but it is only because they are competing against economically crippled newly independent countries whose economies are actually crippled by the Zionist-capitalist conspiracy. They can't stand against fair competition, thus they dread Gamal Abdul Nasser's call for African-Arab Unity under Socialism.

Messiah?

If the "religious" claim of the Zionists is true that they were to be led to the promised land by their messiah, and Israel's present occupation of Arab Palestine is the fulfillment of that prophesy: where is their messiah whom their prophets said would get the credit for leading them there? It was [United Nations mediator] Ralph Bunche who "negotiated" the Zionists into possession of Occupied Palestine! Is Ralph Bunche the messiah of Zionism? If Ralph Bunche is not their messiah, and their messiah has not yet come, then what are they doing in Palestine ahead of their messiah?

Did the Zionists have the legal or moral right to invade Arab Palestine, uproot its Arab citizens from their homes and seize all Arab property for themselves just based on the "religious" claim that their forefathers lived there thousands of years ago? Only a thousand years ago the Moors lived in Spain. Would this give the Moors of today the legal and moral right to invade the Iberian Peninsula, drive out its Spanish citizens, and then set up a new Moroccan nation...where Spain used to be, as the European Zionists have done to our Arab brothers and sisters in Palestine?

In short the Zionist argument to justify Israel's present occupation of Arab Palestine has no intelligent or legal basis in history...not even in their own religion. Where is their Messiah?

Malcolm X

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UN Security Council Resolution, John Kerry and Two State Solution for Palestine and Israel

What is the Real Picture?

By Azza Rojbi & Noah Fine

“Friends don’t take friends to the security council,” clamored Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu about the recent United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution condemning Israel for its ongoing and further expansion of illegal settlements into the West Bank. This ridiculous statement, which could only be matched perhaps by the pre-teen wit of Donald Trump himself, set the course for Israel’s current onslaught of attacks against Palestinians, their supporters and even those who simply request that Israel treat the Palestinian people with a slight bit more fairness.

The back and forth between Israel, the Obama administration and the incoming Trump administration has been dazzling our senses since the resolution was passed. But what is to be understood from this political circus and what does it mean for the heroic people of Palestine who, for a century now, have been struggling for their self-determination?

United Nations Security Council Resolution 2334

On December 23, 2016 the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) voted 14-0 in favor of Resolution 2334 condemning Israel’s ever growing expansion of settlements in the West Bank, Palestine. The resolution was put forward by New Zealand, Venezuela, Malaysia and Senegal with almost all members of the Security Council voting in favor. The United States abstained, choosing not to use its veto power, allowing the resolution to be adopted.

An excerpt from the UN resolution reads “[The Security Council] reiterates its demand that Israel immediately and completely ceases all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and that it fully respect all of its legal obligations in this regard.”

While this resolution is a positive step for Palestine, as it shows the support of the world towards basic elements of their cause and further isolates Israel, the resolution itself is non-binding and doesn’t put in place any mechanisms for being implemented. It also

comes following dozens of other resolutions passed over the last decades by the UN Security Council that Israel has never abided by. Nonetheless overall this resolution represents a tool for the Palestine solidarity movement to further expose and delegitimize the Israeli government for their continuous attacks against the Palestinian people.

After the passing of the resolution, Israel and its spin doctors acted quickly trying to create an international controversy around it. Ron Dermer, the Israeli ambassador to the U.S., said in an interview with the U.S. National Public Radio (NPR) on December 27, 2016, “It’s an old story that the UN is just a cesspool of anti-Israel activity. What’s new is that the United States doesn’t stand up to anti-Israel efforts.” A quick glance into the history of UN condemnations of the criminal actions committed by the state of Israel easily debunks the ambassador’s claim. In fact if Obama’s administration did not abstain from the vote, he would have been the only U.S. president not to let a resolution critical of Israel pass in the Security Council.

In his final days as U.S. President in January 2009, George W. Bush’s administration abstained, allowing a resolution to be passed demanding an immediate withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza during the Israeli siege of that year. And that follows a history of many hollow condemnations and abstentions by various U.S. administrations on different UN resolutions criticizing Israel.

U.S. Change of Policy or Same Old Games?

The state of Israel has been working to try to paint Obama’s administration as the most anti-Israel regime in U.S. history but their posturing may have a lot more to do with setting the stage for the Trump regime’s reign, than the reality of Obama’s.

Netanyahu’s “friends don’t let friends...” banter easily provoked U.S. president-elect Donald Trump’s

attention. Trump sent two tweets, “We cannot continue to let Israel be treated with such total disdain and disrespect. They used to have a great friend in the U.S., but...” “Not anymore. The beginning of the end was the horrible Iran deal, and now this (U.N.)! Stay strong Israel, January 20th is fast approaching!”

The reality is that Obama’s administration has been one of the friendliest administrations towards Israel. Earlier in 2016 Obama signed the largest military aid package in U.S. history that will fund the Israeli army for the next 10 years to the tune of \$38 billion in U.S. taxpayers’ money.

In a televised speech a few days after the passing of the UNSC resolution, U.S. Secretary of State, John Kerry, defended the position of the Obama administration. He explained, “I want to be very clear: No American administration has done more for Israel’s security than Barack Obama’s. The Israeli prime minister himself has noted our, quote, “unprecedented” military and intelligence cooperation. Our military exercises are more advanced than ever. Our assistance for Iron Dome has saved countless Israeli lives. We have consistently supported Israel’s right to defend itself, by itself, including during actions in Gaza that sparked great controversy.”

As Kerry describes, Obama’s administration has continued and increased the financial and military support for Israel. Contrary to what the pro-Israel media tries to portray, the United States’ relationship with Israel is as strong as ever. With Trump coming into power, from what we can observe from his notorious tweeting, it appears U.S. support for Israeli attacks against the people of Palestine will only increase.

A Palestinian family finds themselves homeless after Israeli army destroyed their home in Khirbat Tana, east of the Palestinian city of Nablus. April 7, 2016





Palestinian women march toward the Qalandia checkpoint separating Ramallah and Jerusalem in a joint Israeli-Palestinian protest against the occupation. March 7, 2015

Are Settlements Really the Issue?

From the UN resolution to debates on any given mainstream media channel, the discussions are centered on Israeli settlements in the West Bank. These settlements are illegal by international law and have been condemned at the UN on numerous occasions in the last 50 years. Even the preamble of this most recent resolution cites 10 previous resolutions at the UNSC, as recently as 2008, all of which passed. But the settlements remain and in fact have increased by greater numbers than any previous period under Netanyahu's leadership.

In John Kerry's hour-long speech, he generally painted a useful picture of the situation in the West Bank when he said, "The number of settlers in the roughly 130 Israeli settlements east of the 1967 lines has steadily grown. The settler population in the West Bank alone, not including East Jerusalem, has increased by nearly 270,000 since Oslo, including 100,000 just since 2009, when President Obama's term began." The reason Kerry, Obama and all would argue that these settlements are a problem, is that they block prospects for the oh-so-holy "Two-State solution". Kerry in his own words stated, "it's not just a question of the overall amount of land available in the West Bank. It's whether the land can be connected or it's broken up into small parcels, like a Swiss cheese, that could never constitute a real state."

This 'real state' that Kerry spoke of is nothing new and has not just recently popped up on the scene. Since 1947 when the UN created the partition plan dividing Palestine into Jewish and Palestinian land, world leaders have revitalized this two state plan time and time again.

But the plan was not practical

anymore than it is today. Firstly, because Israel has never stopped its continued expansion of illegal settlements in the West Bank, making the creation of a Palestinian state in the West Bank impossible or as Kerry said 'swiss cheese'. Secondly, because it is neither in the interest nor desire of Israel to give back any of the land it has stolen or stop plans to expand its occupation. Thirdly, because Israel's backers in the U.S. government are in agreement with the Israeli regime on the first two points. The only slight difference the two have is how to better manage the Palestinian problem, or better to say, to colonize all of historic Palestine.

Zionist Occupation is the Problem!

John Kerry's speech tries to fool people into thinking that Israel's expansion of settlements beyond the 1967 occupation is the main issue between Israel and Palestine. The Israeli occupation of Palestinian land dates back further than 1967. By signing the Balfour declaration in 1917, Britain handed out the Palestinian land to the Zionists who used the slogan, "A land without a people for a people without land," to build a political movement around the racist Zionist ideology.

The Zionist agenda supported by the British and other colonial powers continued its expansion on Palestinian land and established the State of Israel in 1948. In establishing themselves on the "land without a people", the Zionist forces killed an estimated 13,000 Palestinians and forcibly evicted 737,166 Palestinians from their homes and land. 531 one Palestinian villages were entirely depopulated and destroyed.

The expansion of Israeli settlements we see today are the continuation of the more than 100 years of brutal Zionist occupation of Palestinian land. The situation on the ground

for Palestinians has increasingly worsened as Israel continues its attacks, bombings and siege on Gaza killing thousands of people and destroying tens of thousands of homes, schools, hospitals and every infrastructure possible. Today there are about 7.2 million Palestinian refugees worldwide.

One Palestine, One Vote!

In his speech, Secretary of State John Kerry's pointed out, "So if there is only one state, you would have millions of Palestinians permanently living in segregated enclaves in the middle of the West Bank, with no real political rights, separate legal, education, and transportation systems, vast income disparities, under a permanent military occupation that deprives them of the most basic freedoms." Basically what John Kerry is saying is that Israeli government, with the expansion of settlements in the West Bank, leaves no space for deceiving and manipulating the world public opinion for continuing a permanent phony and fake negotiation which started in the early 1990's. Secretary Kerry and the U.S. government know very well that the Israeli government has already killed the two state solution by injecting more than 700,000 of Jewish settlers into the West Bank in the last 50 years.

What John Kerry fears and describes is close to the reality of Palestinians living in the West Bank, but doesn't come close to the brutality of life in the Gaza strip. Kerry's warning of the "one state" option is based on perpetual Israeli occupation of Palestine and the total subjugation of millions of Palestinians under a so-called Jewish and democratic Israel, a false and contradictory claim by Zionists. Modern democracies are secular states. Certainly an Israeli Jewish state can not be a democracy.

The one state of Israel solution is what exists in Palestine currently. It has only been undergoing the process of colonization over the past 100 years. The ethnic cleansing of the West Bank of its Palestinian inhabitants and the constant bombing of Gaza, the world's largest open-air prison, are both part of Israel's road towards total occupation and colonization. As long as the racist Zionist state of Israel exists, there will be no solution, no peace. We will continue to see more settlements, killings, war, occupation and plunder of Palestine.

Jewish people have more in common with Palestinians than they do with the government of Israel. Both want to live in peace and both are oppressed, although at very different levels, by the state of Israel. The only solution towards peace is that Jewish people and Palestinian people unite, together, in one country called Palestine. With the Right of Return granted to Palestinians who have been made refugees and adopting what was so critical in the fall of apartheid in South Africa: one person, one vote. This serves as the only real option forward for the two people who deserve to live together in peace and security.

Follow Azza on Twitter: @Azza_R14

Follow Noah on Twitter: @noahfine



Protesters marching in downtown Vancouver against Israel's assault on Gaza. August 24, 2014

Fidel's Legacy



By Arnold August*

From his high school days into the 1950s, Fidel Castro familiarized himself with the writings and activities of José Martí, among other 19th-century Cuban fighters for social justice and independence from Spain. Fidel read all of Martí's 28 volumes. He also studied the works and practical activities of Marx, Engels and Lenin. He examined and held a deep respect for the Bolshevik Revolution. During this early period of his remarkable autodidactic evolution, he lived and was politically active not only in Cuba but secondarily in other Latin American countries, such as the Dominican Republic. The revolutionary traditions and thought of the entire region also entered into his mindset. It consumed his thinking as well as his very political spirit as a rapidly evolving revolutionary ready to give his life for the cause of the humble. This thirst for familiarization with different strands of Cuban and international political thought and action carried on throughout his life.

Fidel's legacy, among many other features, lies in his singular capacity to link theory and practice. He did so, taking into account the historically unprecedented longevity of his political journey, like no other revolutionary of the 20th and early 21st centuries. Gabriel García Márquez, an icon of Latin American thinking who personally knew Fidel very well, wrote that Fidel is the "the anti-dogmatist par excellence" ("A Personal Portrait of Fidel Castro." In *Fidel Castro, Fidel: My Early Years*, Ocean Press, Melbourne, 1998, page 17). It is worthwhile to stop and reflect upon this evaluation of the extent of Fidel's anti-dogmatism.

Che Guevara lived and fought with Fidel Castro in the centre of the Sierra Maestra and after the 1959 triumph. In Bolivia, on

the July 26, 1967 anniversary of the attack on Moncada, Che wrote in his Bolivian diary about the "the significance of July 26, a rebellion against oligarchies and against revolutionary dogmas" (Ernesto Che Guevara, *The Bolivian Diary of Ernesto Che Guevara*, Pathfinder Press, Montreal, 1994, page 239). Yes, you read it right: "revolutionary dogmas." Fidel and the movement he led were forced to go against the tide of the dominant left at the time in Cuba by opening up the path of armed struggle with the attack on two Batista barracks, including Moncada.

Thus, this rebellion was also a revolt against this older left, which was not able to seize the historic moment. Moncada was not, from the point of view of the left, "politically correct." Some of the left, both in Cuba and internationally, slandered Castro as a "petty bourgeois putschist" for his groundbreaking Moncada rebellion. It was supposedly not justified by the followers of Marxist "manuals," seen by them as dogma fixed in time and space rather than as a guide to action. Fidel turned revolutionary thinking and practice on its head. The strategies and conditions of the Bolsheviks were not the same as those existing in Cuba in the 1950s that led to the Triumph of the Revolution in 1959. Nor is the situation in Cuba the same now as it was in 1959. Only a revolution

purged of dogmatism, such as the Cuban one, can navigate through a world in flux.

In the 1950s he rallied the recalcitrant left trend in Cuba to the cause. He did so through his July 26 Movement's actions, spirit of self-sacrifice and new political thought. The latter was manifested in his "History Will Absolve Me" speech that was his defence in the trial following his capture after the failure of Moncada. All of these factors combined shook Cuba to its very foundations, a result only a self-reliant thinker and his collaborators could produce.

The rest is history. Or is it? No.

How many times did Fidel Castro go against the tide and lead Cuba out of a dead-end disaster?

As just one illustration, he refused to go along with Mikhail Gorbachev's reforms and capitulation to the U.S. in 1991. In fact, he actually foresaw the crumbling of the U.S.S.R. two years before it took place. Where is this requisite life-and-death resistance and defiance explicitly expressed in any of the works of Marx or Lenin or José Martí? Yet these political



figures all exude the principles, thinking and self-sacrificing devotion to the cause of the people that are applied to such unforeseen challenges. Nevertheless, even with this heritage from the 19th and very early 20th century, in the threatening and stormy uncharted waters between the late 1980s and 1991 the Cuban revolutionaries had to figure out the way forward by themselves. The U.S. was waiting in the wings, licking its chops at the prospect that Cuba would fall into line. Where would Cuba be now had it not made the break at that time by again remaining faithful to its anti-dogmatic tradition, thus allowing new ideas and orientations to guide it?

Thus, Fidel's legacy lies in his capacity to link theory and practice, or practice and theory, through the concrete analysis of concrete conditions. "Analysis" presupposes a theoretical outlook, true; however, this perspective applied to "concrete conditions" means paying attention to the real world and seizing the moment based on the needs and aspirations of the vast majority of Cuban people at any given time. The capacity to intrinsically and consistently marry the two, theory and practice, makes for a revolutionary such as Fidel.

Some may say that by dealing with this exemplary leadership of Fidel on theory and practice, one falls prey to individualizing Fidel and thus personalizing the Cuban Revolution to the detriment of the role played by the people and his closest collaborators.

However, nothing is further from the truth. Where does the success of concrete analysis of concrete conditions find its source if not in the people? Concrete conditions correspond to the humble people and their ongoing movement. Both theory and practice are inseparable when it comes to Fidel.

In addition to this lesson of method, its actual concrete manifestations as found in his pronouncements on myriad domestic and international issues are part of his legacy. For example, in 2001, he said that "Revolution means to have a sense of history; it is changing everything that must be changed." This provides Cubans with a daily political practical orientation. Likewise, he said in 2005 in the context of dealing with domestic problems that "This country can self-destruct; this Revolution can destroy itself, but they [foreign powers] can never destroy us; we can destroy ourselves, and it would be our fault." On the complex issue of Cuba-U.S. relations, since December 17, 2014, Fidel expressed his opinions on several occasions. They are not only pertinent but necessary to guide Cuba's policy today and in the future, as well as to provide the consciousness to progressive people all over the world regarding this contentious international preoccupation.

One cannot overestimate the role of the individual in history, but it is as misleading to underestimate it. For example, Charles Darwin was a naturalist who posited the theories of evolution and

natural selection. He broke the mould by studying the existing works of other scientists with whom he consulted and, most importantly, by analyzing nature on his own. Similarly, Marx followed this path to make his discoveries in social and political thought. While I am not comparing Fidel to Darwin or Marx, as he would be the very last to condone such an unjustified comparison, the principle of the individual's determining role in opening up hitherto unexplored paths by linking thinking and conditions applies to Fidel. He is an outstanding archetype of the 20th century and even well into the 21st century as his thinking and example will be applicable for at least several decades more in this century.

Fidel was a political figure who thought for himself. However, his approach was based first and foremost on revolutionary principles. He was an anti-dogmatist par excellence in whom theory and the practical movement of Cuba's humble were intertwined with each other to the extent that each one was indistinguishable on its own. He succeeded on this path further than anyone else from the 1940s until October 11, 2016, the last time his words were published. Finally, though, Fidel had the last word on November 25, 2016 when Cuba – a small, blockaded Third World country that had only 56 years earlier broke the shackles of 500 years of colonialism and imperialism – took centre stage in the world, leaving no one, friend and foe alike, indifferent to this giant of theory and practice. In the long life and work of Fidel Castro, there was never a breach between thinking and practice: they were one. This legacy, universally applicable, is now part of humanity's path for progressives, left-leaning people and revolutionaries to follow.

**Arnold August, a Canadian journalist and lecturer, is the author of Democracy in Cuba and the 1997–98 Elections and, more recently, Cuba and Its Neighbours: Democracy in Motion. Cuba's neighbours under consideration are the U.S., Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador. Arnold can be followed on Twitter @Arnold_August*

Reprinted from: <http://www.counterpunch.org>



By Janine Solanki

On December 17, 2014, US President Obama made a historic announcement that the US government would be normalizing relations with Cuba and beginning the process of ending the US blockade on Cuba. While many people believed the end of the blockade was imminent, Cuba solidarity activists in Vancouver answered Cuba's call to put even more pressure on the US government to end the criminal, unjust blockade. Friends of Cuba Against the Blockade – Vancouver (FCAB-Van) formed shortly after Obama's announcement, and recognized that the opening of talks between the US and Cuban government presented an opportunity, not an inevitability, to end of the blockade. Over the last two years FCAB-Van has organized monthly picket actions in front of the US Consulate in Vancouver, Canada, as well as held forums and other events against the now 56 year long blockade of Cuba.

Two years on, there have been positive steps forward. Diplomatic relations have officially been restored, and embassies have reopened in Washington DC and Havana. Some travel and trade restrictions have been eased. At the 2016 25th annual United Nations resolution against the US blockade on Cuba the US abstained from the vote for the first time, causing the resolution to pass unanimously. These have been major victories for Cuba, but have still stopped short of ending the blockade.

Now, come January 20th 2017 Republican

2 YEARS AFTER OBAMA'S ANNOUNCEMENT: THE FIGHT TO END THE US BLOCKADE ON CUBA CONTINUES!



President-Elect Trump will be inaugurated as President of the United States, with a majority Republican Congress. While the decisions that the new administration will take in regards to US/Cuba relations cannot be predicted, Donald Trump has threatened to "terminate" the progresses made so far at normalizing relations. It is clear now more than ever that protest and public pressure to end the blockade is vital.

Picket Line Continues

On December 17th, 2016 FCAB-Van organized a monthly picket action at the US consulate marking two years since US President Obama's announcement. With picket signs and energetic chanting, protesters

demanding "End the Blockade on Cuba Now!" and "Return Guantanamo to Cuba Now!" Along with local speakers at the picket action, a phone greeting was also played from Ottawa-Cuba Connections, who organize monthly picket actions in front of the US Embassy in Ottawa. Coordinated actions in Canada against the US blockade also included a protest in Toronto, making it three major cities in Canada protesting in solidarity with Cuba and against the blockade!

Twitter Campaign for Cuba

In response to a call from Cuba solidarity activists in the US, protesters in Vancouver also took part in a twitter storm directed at Donald Trump. Activists took photos holding signs demanding the end of the blockade and tweeted them with the hashtag #CubaSiBloqueoNo to send an online message to @realDonaldTrump! You can see these photos and more on twitter @NoBloqueoVan.

FCAB-Van will be out on the streets again in front of the US Consulate, on January 17 at 4pm, just a few days before Donald Trump's Presidential inauguration, to send a strong and clear message to the government of the US and Donald Trump:

**END THE BLOCKADE ON CUBA NOW!
RETURN GUANTANAMO TO CUBA NOW!
US GOVERNMENT STOP THE CAMPAIGN
OF 'REGIME CHANGE' IN CUBA AND
IMMEDIATELY STOP INTERFERING
IN CUBA'S SOVEREIGNTY AND SELF-
DETERMINATION!**



By Janine Solanki

Keeping track of what is happening in Iraq and Syria is no simple task these days, if only viewing the situation through the filter of mainstream Western media and with the rhetoric of US politicians. However if you look past the media manipulations, the US imperialist policy and actions in Iraq and Syria are full of contradictions and misinformation.

While the US-led offensive in Mosul claimed to be with the intention of liberating the city from Daesh (also known as ISIS), one can imagine how liberation in that city felt when the US dropped bombs every eight minutes for three days and bombed targets such as schools and hospitals. The narrative is flipped in Syria, however, where the main goal of the US government is to overthrow the Syrian government. An intense mainstream media and imperialist propaganda campaign have

WHAT'S REALLY GOING ON IN SYRIA AND IRAQ? Mobilization Against War & Occupation Discusses New Era of War & Occupation

demonized the Syrian government's efforts to take back East Aleppo from so-called rebels after four years under their control. US media does not mention how these "rebels" which they support include Al-Qaeda linked groups such as Jabhat al-Nusra. US media also fails to mention that these terrorist groups stopped or killed civilians trying to leave East Aleppo, or what life was like for four years under the rule of these terrorist groups.

In order to discuss these contradictions and to bring forward the facts and analysis on the US war in Iraq and Syria, Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO) organized a public forum on December 13, 2016. The forum was titled "US and All Imperialists Hands Off Syria! From Mosul to Raqqa and Aleppo, What Strategy is the US Pursuing in the Middle East & North Africa?"

The forum began with video and news clips including alternative media, providing the audience with perspectives not found in mainstream news. The speaker of the evening was Nita Palmer, author of "War and Occupation in Afghanistan: Which Way Forward?" from Battle of Ideas Press. Nita spoke on the current situation in Syria and Iraq, as well as the overall

strategy of the US-led new era of war and occupation. While Syria and Iraq are bearing the brunt of this war drive now, the new era of war and occupation is a US-led imperialist strategy to gain hegemony in the Middle East and North Africa, that also includes the war and occupation of Afghanistan, the bombing of Libya and Yemen and sanctions and threats against Iran.

Following the videos and speakers forum participants took part in an open discussion. This included discussing the government of Canada's role in Iraq and Syria, and the large behind-the-scenes military involvement Canada has in imperialist operations in both Iraq and Syria.

The forum closed with the MC of the night, MAWO chair Alison Bodine, encouraging participants to join MAWO in the next antiwar rally and petition campaign, to take the antiwar perspective discussed in the forum out on the street in protest.

**US Hands Off Syria and Iraq!
No to War and Occupation! Yes to Self-
Determination!**

Follow Janine on Twitter: @janinesolanki

El tiempo no devora redentores



*Estatua viva del metal más fuerte,
no pudiendo los monstruos de oro y cieno
matarte con la bala y el veneno,
quieren que el tiempo te condene a muerte.*

*Cuentan tus horas, les anima verte
blanca la barba de perfil heleno;
y en la alta cumbre del pensar sereno
el brote de tus canas les divierte.*

*Los pueblos, sin embargo, te dan rosas,
poemas y canciones más por cosas
de cumpleaños que de cumpleaños,
pues la edad de los héroes y los genios
no se mide por días ni por años
sino por largos siglos y milenios.*

Jesús Orta Ruiz,
«El Indio Nabori»
(Escrito en 1996, con motivo
de los 70 años de Fidel)

Time Does Not Devour Redeemers

Living statue of the strongest metal,
The monsters of gold and silt who could not
Kill you with bullet and poison,
Want time to condemn you to death.

They count your hours, are encouraged by
seeing your beard gone white on your Greek
profile;
And on the high summit of serene thinking
The outbreak of your gray hair amuses
them.

The peoples, however, give you roses,
poems and songs; more for the dreams
you made come true than for your birthdays.
Because the age of the heroes and geniuses
is not measured by days or years,
But for long centuries and millennia.

Jesús Orta Ruiz, “El Indio Nabori”
(Written in 1996, for Fidel’s 70th Birthday)

A CubaNews translation.
Edited by Walter Lippmann.
www.walterlippmann.com

58 Years of Revolution! Fidel’s Ideas and Example Lives!

*-Isaac Saney, Canadian Network on
Cuba CNC National Spokesperson,
December 31, 2016 -*

On the occasion of the 58th anniversary of the triumph of the Cuban Revolution, the Canadian Network on Cuba, on behalf of the Canada-Cuba friendship and solidarity movement, extends our warmest and most heartfelt greetings to the Cuban people, the Cuban government and Cuba’s revolutionary leadership. This anniversary is especially poignant and bittersweet as it is the first commemoration without the physical presence of Compañero Fidel, the historic leader and founder of the Cuban Revolution. Cuba’s President Raúl Castro observed that while Fidel has left us, “Fidel left undefeated.”

Fidel’s example and fidelity to principle continue to inspire the Cuban people, who continue on the path of independence, self-determination and human dignity. On January 1, 1959, the people of Cuba led by Fidel Castro firmly took control of their destiny. The years since then are filled with the rich and profound illustration of what can be achieved when a country wins and defends its independence and exercises its right to self-determination. Despite all efforts of the empire to bring Cuba to her knees, the resilience and determination of the Cuban people to defend the independence and dignity of their homeland, which is the basis of their own freedom and dignity, has prevailed time and time again.

Today, the Cuban people continue to renew their Revolution, a living example that it is possible to build societies based on social relations of genuine solidarity and social love. We are confident that the Cuban



people will continue to prevail, overcoming all the challenges and difficulties they face.

As the Cuban people confidently march forward, the CNC reaffirms its commitment to strengthen and deepen the ties of friendship and solidarity between the peoples of Canada and Cuba, resolving to do the utmost to defeat the U.S. economic blockade of Cuba, end Washington’s ongoing campaign of subversion and ensure the return to Cuba of the illegally occupied territory of the U.S. naval base at Guantánamo Bay.

¡Viva la Revolución Cubana!

NOTHING BUT DESTRUCTION

1 YEAR SINCE THE RIGHT-WING TAKEOVER OF VENEZUELA'S NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

By Alison Bodine

2017 is the 19th year of the Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela. For nearly two decades this revolution, which began with the election of Comandante Hugo Chávez in 1998, has been making tremendous gains for poor, working and oppressed people in Venezuela. Including massive improvements in education, healthcare and housing. The fact is, in Venezuela today more people are living just and dignified lives.

The Bolivarian Revolution has made these gains despite being under continuous attack from the capitalist class in Venezuela. Venezuela's ultra-rich, which still control a majority of the production and distribution in Venezuela, have tried through many violent and criminal actions, to reverse the current of the Bolivarian Revolution. This includes waging a vicious economic war of price gouging, hoarding and smuggling, in an attempt to destabilize Venezuela and



Government official examining tons of hoarded rice discovered in Tachira State, Venezuela, 2015.

provoking civil unrest. They have also led direct attacks on the leaders of the revolution, including assassinations and failed coup d'états against the late Comandante Hugo Chávez, as well as President Nicolás Maduro.

Venezuela's counter-revolutionaries are not working alone. Ever since the first days of the Bolivarian Revolution, Venezuela has also been a target of the U.S. government and their imperialist allies. From economic sanctions and military threats, to financial and political support for the violent counter-revolutionary opposition in Venezuela, the U.S. government has been working non-stop to overturn the Bolivarian Revolution and regain their hegemony in Latin America.

As the people of Venezuela have been facing these right-wing attacks, Western mainstream media has also joined in the assault. Media outlets from the Washington Post and the New York Times, to social media sites like Buzzfeed have all joined in the campaign to demonize the government of the Bolivarian Revolution and call for international intervention in Venezuela. By using lies and manipulations to paint Venezuela as a state on the verge of complete collapse, mainstream media opens the door for further imperialist intervention.

What's Happening in Venezuela Today

In December, 2015 a right-wing majority was elected into Venezuela's National Assembly. For only the second time in the history of the Bolivarian Revolution, revolutionary forces lost in a general election. The U.S. government and mainstream media would have us believe that the results of these elections meant that the people of Venezuela do not support their government and the Bolivarian Revolution. However, even a brief examination of the past year



Cartoon featuring a leader in Venezuela's counter-revolutionary opposition, Henrique Capriles.

in Venezuela, starting with a look at the economic conditions that shaped the election, demonstrate just the opposite.

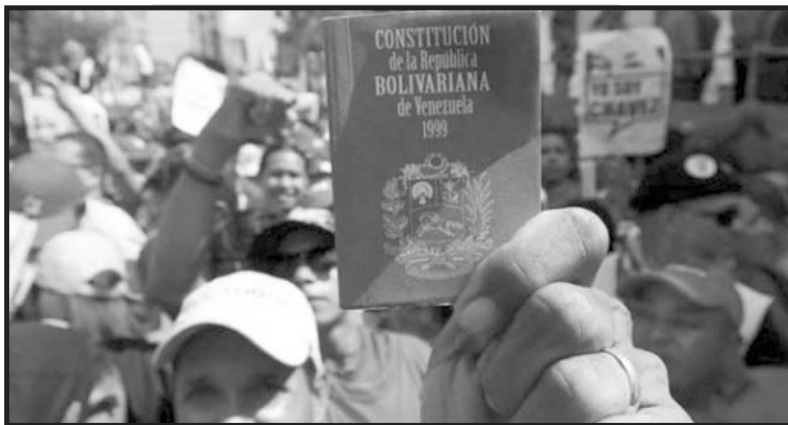
Venezuela's economy in December of 2015 was already struggling; faced with a sharp drop in oil prices (which had dropped by over \$65 a barrel in only two years), as well as right-wing internal and international manipulation and sabotage. Then, in the months leading up to the election, Venezuela's capitalist class increased their attacks on the economy creating massive shortages that were leaving shelves empty of food staples and basic goods. In this way, the National Assembly elections were really a litmus test of the impact of the economic situation on the people of Venezuela.

It has now been one year since Venezuela's right-wing majority National Assembly has been elected. In this time, the right-wing majority in the National Assembly has been working with one goal in mind - to overthrow President Nicolás Maduro and return the country to the hands of Venezuela's capitalist class, the U.S. government and their allies. They have, however, failed to achieve any of their reactionary objectives. Despite tremendous internal and external pressure, the people of Venezuela and the Bolivarian Revolution have continued to mobilize in defense of President Nicolás Maduro and their revolution.

Right-wing Demonization Brings Chaos to the National Assembly

From the very first, the right-wing majority National Assembly has made their counter-revolutionary intentions clear. Before they even met for the first time, they removed portraits of Comandante Hugo Chávez as well as Latin American revolutionary Simón Bolívar from the walls of the National Assembly.

With every subsequent action, they have also made apparent their willingness to destroy the rule of law in Venezuela, and contravene Venezuela's Supreme Court, as well as violate Venezuela's constitution. This began with the swearing-in of the newly elected deputies. Due to allegations of fraud and vote-buying during the 2015 National Assembly elections, four people that had been elected were ordered by Venezuela's Supreme Court (TSJ) to not take their seats. Instead of allowing Venezuela's judiciary branch of



A supporter of the Venezuelan government holds up a copy of the Constitution.

“Legislation” That Violates Venezuelan Law

However, the right-wing majority in the National Assembly has still managed to pass 16 pieces of legislation. The first was a law meant to privatize social housing. Another, known as the “National Production Law,” was yet again to move towards more privatization, this time of land and basic industries. This law was also a direct assault on Venezuela's labour laws and state-run corporations.

The Amnesty Law was a law calling for the release of 115 so-called ‘political prisoners’ in Venezuela. The criminals that this law would have released were members of Venezuela's violent opposition who have been charged and convicted of serious crimes. These

crimes include arson, drug trafficking, and corruption, as well as those related to the violent riots that took place in Venezuela in 2014, known as the Guarimbas, which killed 43 people. The Amnesty Law would have also released people imprisoned for their involvement in the failed coup against Hugo Chavez in 2002.

Other laws that have been passed by the majority right-wing opposition have been those attempting to re-write the constitution by shortening the Presidential term, or changing the procedures for the recall of elected officials. All of them have had the intention of bringing instability and destruction to Venezuela.

Of a total of 16 laws passed, 15 have been ruled as unconstitutional and annulled by the Supreme Court of Venezuela. This is no surprise given that Venezuela's constitution, which is a product of the Bolivarian Revolution, has enshrined the rights of people over profit. In Venezuela, laws that alter the spirit of the constitution must be passed by a majority of the people of Venezuela, not by a National Assembly led by counter-revolutionaries.

Counter-Revolutionary Attempts to Overthrow President Maduro

Rather than working on legislation to improve the lives of people in Venezuela, the right-wing majority National Assembly has instead



Protest against the “Amnesty Law” passed by the right-wing majority National Assembly - April, 2016.

government to complete its investigation, three of these politicians, who were all members of the right-wing opposition, were sworn in by the right-wing majority National Assembly. The TSJ immediately declared the National Assembly to be in contempt of court.

Along with this disgraceful fiasco, the National Assembly has also been plagued by absenteeism by the right-wing. As of November, Prensa Latina reported that the National Assembly has failed to meet quorum on 34 different occasions.



Victims of “the Guarimbas,” right-wing riots in 2014 that killed 43 people, march in Táchira State, Venezuela March, 2015.

focused their efforts on overthrowing the President of Venezuela. As the leader of the revolutionary bloc in the National Assembly, Hector Rodriguez summarized, “The role of the National Assembly (AN) has to be analyzed from the point of view of a family. They have conspired instead of working. Faced with a situation of difficulty like this, the opposition chose to impose its political ambitions.” (Correo Orinoco)

From the onset, the counter-revolutionary ex-President of the National Assembly, Henry Ramos Allup was very clear about his vision of the role of the National Assembly. He even went as far as to declare that they would oust President Nicolás Maduro “in less than six months”. This is how the recall referendum against President Maduro became number one on agenda of the right-wing members of the National Assembly.

According to Venezuela’s constitution any elected official, including the President, can be recalled in a popular referendum as soon as they have served one-half of their term. The constitution has laid out a very specific process, and a timeline, that must be followed in order for this to happen. However, due to a late-start in the process as well as tens of thousands of fraudulent signatures, the counter-revolutionary opposition has now failed in this attempt.

Now, the right-wing majority National Assembly itself has taken direct steps. Since late October they have been attempting to initiate impeachment proceedings against President Maduro. There is, however, no mention of “impeachment” or any kind of political trial in Venezuelan law. Essentially,

the counter-revolutionary dominated National Assembly, which is supposed to introduce laws to support and protect the people of Venezuela, is instead working extra-legally to try and overthrow the President. On November 15, the Supreme Court even issued the injunction calling on the right-wing parliamentarians to end their attempts at a political trial.

It is important to know as well, that not only does the National Assembly resolution call for a political trial against Maduro declaring, “Venezuela has suffered a coup d’etat and the constitutional order has broken down” (BBC), but it also appeals to international organizations to intervene in Venezuela.

National Assembly Appeals for International Intervention

This is not the first time that the majority right-wing National Assembly has called for international intervention in Venezuela.

This dangerous counter-revolutionary campaign began with an appeal to the Washington, DC based Organization of American States (OAS). In May of 2016, the opposition dominated National Assembly sent a letter to the President of the OAS, Luis Almagro, calling on the OAS to invoke the “Democratic Charter” against Venezuela. If approved by a vote of the OAS member-groups, Venezuela would be removed from the regional organization, which would only bring more economic instability to Venezuela. So far this campaign of the opposition has been unsuccessful, despite additional

pressure from right-wing governments in Latin America, as well as the United States (which provides 59% of OAS funding). However, the larger question is - what kind of National Assembly would request that their country be isolated from a regional body and under what



Anti-imperialist march in Venezuela, 2015

authority?

Prior to sending the request letter, right-wing members of Venezuela’s National Assembly also travelled to the headquarters of the OAS in Washington, DC to request intervention in the internal affairs of their country. A trip to the United States was not surprising for many of these reactionary politicians. Venezuela’s counter-revolutionary opposition is, in fact, quite comfortable interacting and making deals with the U.S. government. This is despite the fact that not only does Venezuela not currently have an Ambassador in the U.S., the U.S. government is also actively working to destroy the lives of the majority of people in Venezuela through both overt and covert attacks and interventions.

In March of 2015, US President Barack Obama issued an Executive Order declaring Venezuela to be an “extraordinary threat to U.S. national security”. This order, as well as the criminal economic sanctions which it enables the Congress to uphold, are still in place today. On top of support and funding for Venezuela’s violent opposition parties and so-called civil society organizations, U.S. intervention has also included numerous threatening actions by the U.S. Naval fleet in the region, as well as, CIA radio and TV programs meant to sew unrest in Venezuela and more.

Foreign threats and intervention against Venezuela continue to expand. On December 26, 2016 the Venezuelan Ministry of Foreign Relations issued a



Mass march in Venezuela demanding that U.S. President Obama repeal the Executive Order against Venezuela

statement regarding NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) military cooperation with Colombia. Recently, the President of Colombia announced the signing of a military cooperation agreement between Colombia, which borders Venezuela, and NATO. What is NATO, a reactionary mainly European military alliance -against the former Soviet Union and now Russia- led by the United States that has brought untold death and destruction upon millions of oppressed people from Yugoslavia to Afghanistan to Libya, doing in Colombia? This agreement is an effort to expand imperialist military alliance and war mongering in Latin America and yet another U.S.-led attack on the Bolivarian Revolution and the revolutionary current of change in Latin America.

Why People of the World must Defend the Venezuelan Revolution

As the New Year arrives, there is no sign that U.S. intervention, and the campaign of the counter-revolutionary opposition

Rally in support of President Nicolas Maduro in front of the National Assembly, January 15, 2016.



is slowing down in Venezuela. In 2017 the people of Venezuela will have to fight harder than ever to defend the Bolivarian Revolution.

The past year has proven that President Maduro, the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) and the vast majority of the people of Venezuela will continue to organize and mobilize to not only maintain their achievements, but to expand them. Most recently, on December 17, 2016, the people of Venezuela responded to a call for mobilization by President Maduro and took to the streets to demonstrate against the continued

hoarding and price gouging of Venezuela's capitalist class.

From Canada, the United States and around the world it is vital that we echo their demands and continue to mobilize people in defense of President Nicolás Maduro and the Bolivarian Revolution. We must not be silent as major Western media demonizes a country that is fighting for a more united and sovereign Latin America. A country that along with Cuba, has been working to build a revolutionary Latin American counter-balance of power and end U.S. hegemony and destruction once and for all. Every victory for the Bolivarian Revolution and the people of Venezuela, whether for their sovereignty, self-determination or a more just and equal society, is also a victory for poor, working and oppressed people around the world.

Viva Venezuela!
U.S. Hands Off Venezuela!
No to Yankee Intervention!

Follow Alison on Twitter: @Alisoncolette

Vancouver Activists Campaigning on the Streets Through Picketing, Petitioning and Social Media in Defense of Venezuela

By Janine Solanki

Venezuela today is engaged in a struggle for its future. With the leadership of President Maduro, and with the legacy of Comandante Hugo Chavez, Venezuela had been on the road of the Bolivarian Revolution for the last 13 years. This has meant huge progresses across the board for Venezuelans, with missions to improve literacy, education, health and housing, access to subsidized food, and the development of art and technology. Venezuelans have become organized as a force of change for their future, as you can see in the massive demonstrations in support of their government and the Bolivarian Revolution.

An economic war is being waged within Venezuela from right-wing forces, as well as from the external pressure of US sanctions. US hostility and threats against Venezuela include an executive order from President Obama declaring Venezuela to be an "unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States" which opens the door for US covert and overt intervention and interference in Venezuela.

In Vancouver, the Fire This Time Venezuela Solidarity Campaign is standing in solidarity with Venezuela and the Bolivarian Revolution. On December 9th, 2016 the FTT Venezuela Solidarity Campaign organized their 13th consecutive monthly action, bringing protest and education onto the streets of



Vancouver.

Picket Action

The December 9th action started with a picket demanding "US Hands Off Venezuela!" in front of the US consulate in downtown Vancouver. Protesters raised their picket signs high and voices loud while marching through the snow, and heard from speakers in defense of Venezuela and against US meddling in the country.

Petition Campaign

After the picket action, the protest continued in front of the Vancouver Art Gallery in downtown Vancouver. An information table and banners were

setup for a petition drive and display proclaiming "Maduro is our President! Activists had the opportunity to discuss the situation in Venezuela with dozens of passers-by while collecting signatures on a petition demanding the US stop its intervening and threats against Venezuela.

Twitter Campaign

Venezuela supporters also participated in a twitter campaign taking photos with the hashtag #ObamaDeragoElDecretoYa demanding that Obama repeal the executive order against Venezuela. On December 17th the FTT Venezuela Solidarity Campaign took part in another international twitter day in solidarity with Venezuela taking photos with

Venezuelan flags and picket signs in front of the US consulate.

To find out about upcoming actions in solidarity with Venezuela follow on twitter @FTT_np or www.firethistime.net

PRESIDENT OBAMA REPEAL THE DECREE NOW!

U.S. HANDS OFF VENEZUELA!

U.S. RESPECT THE SOVEREIGNTY & SELF-DETERMINATION OF THE VENEZUELAN PEOPLE!

LONG LIVE THE VENEZUELAN BOLIVARIAN REVOLUTION!

The 10 Victories of President Maduro in 2016

In early 2016, Venezuela's authorities had very difficult problems to solve. Namely, 1) the neoliberal opposition had won the legislative elections of 2015 and controlled the National Assembly, 2) the price of oil, the main export of Venezuela, had fallen to its lowest point in decades, and 3) US President Barack Obama had signed an executive order that declared Venezuela to be an "unusual and extraordinary threat to the US national security and foreign policy".

That is, in three decisive areas (political, economic and geopolitical), the Bolivarian revolution seemed to be playing defensively. Meanwhile, the counter-revolution, both internal and external, seemed to have power at its fingertips.

Furthermore, Chavismo had been under media attack since Hugo Chávez had arrived to power in 1999. The negative propaganda had intensified since April 2013 and reached unseen levels of violence after the election of President Nicolás Maduro.

This permanent aggression by the media created and propagated such a level of disinformation about Venezuela that it even confused many friends of the Bolivarian revolution. In particular because, in this "post-truth era", lies, intellectual fraud and deceit aren't sanctioned with any sort of negative consequence, not even in terms of credibility or image. Anything goes, everything that's useful to achieve an end is valid in this era of post-factual relativism, and sometimes not even the most objective facts or pieces of data are enough to disprove false statements. Denunciations against this strategy are ridiculed by media as "conspiracy theories", and an obsolete element of an "old narrative" that has no basis.

As I was saying, all odds seemed to be against the President of Venezuela in early 2016. The head of the National Assembly, opposition member Henry Ramos Allup even dared to say, emboldened by the Parliamentary majority they had achieved, that he would oust Maduro "in less than



six months". He was undoubtedly inspired by the institutional coup that had ousted President Dilma Rousseff in Brazil, and hoped to achieve a victory in the recall referendum.

That was the state of affairs when President Maduro, in a masterful series of moves that nobody had predicted—and that were perfectly legal according to the Constitution—surprised everyone. He renewed the members of the Supreme Court of Justice (TSJ), whose Constitutional Court has the last word when it comes to interpret the Constitution.

And then the opposition made two huge mistakes:

They decided to ignore the warnings of the TSJ and carry out a session with the three deputies of the Amazonas state, whose appointment was under cautionary suspension due to irregularities in their election. Of course, the TSJ blocked this act of disobedience and declared the National Assembly to be in contempt due to the presence of three "irregularly elected" deputies and therefore stripped all validity from decisions made by the organism until

this situation is solved. So not only did the assembly fail to legislate to control the government but it annulled itself, wasting the power it held. That was Maduro's first victory in 2016.

In their obsessive effort to overthrow the President, the anti-Chavismo opposition also decided to ignore the legal requirements to launch a recall referendum in 2016. And therefore, they failed again. And that was Maduro's second victory.

Even so, there was a phase, in March and April, where everything got terribly complicated. Because the usual attacks by the enemies of the Bolivarian revolution were joined by another destabilizing factor: a huge drought, the second biggest since 1950, and extreme heat caused by El Niño. In Venezuela, 70% of electricity is generated by hydroelectric plants, and the main hydroelectric central comes from the Guri Dam. When the amount of rain decreased, the water levels of this dam dropped to next to minimum.

The counter-revolution sought to take advantage of this situation and sabotage electricity to enrage the people and create chaos and protests. This was even more dangerous because the lack of rain also caused drinking water shortages.

But once again, President Maduro acted swiftly and took dramatic measures: he decreed that millions of incandescent light bulbs had to be replaced by energy saving light bulbs, that old air conditioning systems had to be replaced by new, energy saving ones, he ordered public administration to work half time, and he decreed a special plan of national savings of electricity and water consumption.

Thanks to these bold measures, the President managed to avoid energetic collapse, and obtained one of his most popular victories in 2016.

Another important problem, probably



Women rally holding signs saying "Maduro is the People"

the biggest that the government had to face, partly caused by the economic war on the revolution, was the shortage in food distribution. Before Chávez became president in 1999, 65% of Venezuelans were poor and only 35% had a high quality of life. That means that only 3 out of 10 Venezuelans regularly ate meat, chicken, coffee, corn, milk, sugar and other basic goods. But Chávez wanted everyone to be properly nourished, and in the last 17 years the food consumption grew by 80%. This required a massive investment to increase national food production, but it didn't grow enough to satisfy the growing demand.

Demand grew, and also speculation. And due to the structural limitations to produce enough, prices hiked out of control, while the black market, or "bachaqueo," expanded. The government set ceilings on prices of essential goods. Many people bought those cheap, government-subsidized products and sold them for higher prices. Or smuggled them across the border to Colombia or Brazil, where they sold them for double or triple the price. Therefore, Venezuela lost its dollar reserves (which were already scarce due to the drop in oil prices) to the bloodsuckers that stole basic goods from those in need to get rich. Such a madness had to stop.

Once again, Maduro decided to act with a firm hand. First of all, he changed the philosophy of social welfare. He corrected a very important mistake that Venezuela had been making for years. Instead of subsidizing products, the government had to subsidize people. So that those who were truly in need had access to cheaper products. Everybody else pays the market price. This eliminates speculation and smuggling.

And he also announced a change in the economic model of the country: from a "rentist model" to a "productive model", and defined 15 key sectors to restart the economy in the private, public and communal sector.

One of the practical implementations of these two measures is the creation of Local Committees of Supply and Production (CLAPs), a new form of popular organization. The representatives of these organized communities deliver bags full of low-cost food to each home. Many of these foods are produced by the new national industry. In the upcoming months, CLAPs will feed around four million families.

Another victory was the government's record in social expenditure: 71.4% of the

budget was allocated there. That's a world record. No other state in the world dedicates that much resources to the wellbeing of its people.

In healthcare, for example, the number of hospitals grew 3.5 times since 1999. And investment in the new model of humanitarian, free-for-all healthcare grew ten times.



June 22, 2016 - Workers march in support of President Maduro in Caracas, Venezuela. Banner reads "Petroleum Workers in Support of the Revolution"

The Barrio Adentro Mission, aimed at caring for the health of those who live in the poorest urban areas of the country, has received almost 800 million visits and saved 1,400,000 lives. Free medical universities have trained 27,000 new doctors, and other 30,000 will graduate in 2017. Eight states have achieved a 100% coverage with the Barrio Adentro Mission (the goal had been set at 6). In 2016, the percentage of retired people who earn a pension (regardless of whether they were able to pay for retirement deductions during their active years) reached 90%—a new record for South America.

Spectacular results were achieved by the Housing Mission, which builds accessible homes for disadvantaged families. In 2016 alone, this Mission delivered 359,000 homes for the humble. (While a developed country like France made 109,000 in 2015). Since the beginning of his administration in 2013, a million and a half houses have been made for Venezuelan families. This achievement isn't even mentioned by hegemonic media.

Last but not least, we must recall some of the brilliant victories that Venezuela obtained in the geopolitical arena. For example, it prevented the Organization of American States, which is dominated by Washington, from condemning Caracas by invoking the Democratic Charter against Venezuela.

It also reaped success at the XVII Summit of the Non Aligned Movement that was held in September 2016 in the country, with the attendance of many heads of State and of government, and representatives of 120 countries that expressed their solidarity with Venezuela.

The main victory of President Maduro in this area was the unprecedented deal between OPEC and non-OPEC countries to coordinate together to reduce exports of oil. To achieve this, Maduro made many international tours.

This historic agreement, signed in November 2016, immediately stopped the drop in oil prices, which had been plummeting since mid-2014, when the price was at 100 dollars a barrel, to 24 dollars in January. Thanks to the agreement, the price hiked to 45 dollars by the end of December 2016.

In the longest and hardest year, in which many thought he would fall, President Maduro, overcame all obstacles and proved his exceptional ability as a Statesman. And as a trustworthy leader of the Bolivarian revolution.

Taken from:
<http://www.venezuelasolidarity.co.uk/>

* Ignacio Ramonet is a specialist on geopolitics, economics and the history of culture and a professor of communication theory at the University Denis Diderot in Paris. He was the editor of the French magazine, *Le Monde Diplomatique*. He is the author of "100 Hours with Fidel".



December 31, 2015 - President Maduro inaugurating monument to 1 million homes provided for low-income Venezuelans.

LAS 10 VICTORIAS DEL PRESIDENTE MADURO EN 2016



Mural en Caracas, Venezuela

* EN ESPAÑOL *

Por Ignacio Ramonet*

Todo se presentaba muy complicado, a inicios de 2016, para las autoridades de Caracas. Principalmente por tres razones : 1) la oposición neoliberal había ganado las elecciones legislativas de diciembre 2015 y controlaba la Asamblea Nacional ; 2) los precios del petróleo, principal recurso de Venezuela, habían caído a su nivel más bajo en los últimos decenios ; 3) el presidente estadounidense Barack Obama había firmado una orden ejecutiva en la que declaraba que Venezuela representaba una “inusual y extraordinaria amenaza para la seguridad nacional y la política exterior de Estados Unidos”.

O sea, en tres campos decisivos -el político, el económico y el geopolítico-, la revolución bolivariana parecía estar a la defensiva. Mientras que la contrarrevolución, tanto interna como externa, pensaba tener, por fin, el poder en Venezuela al alcance de la mano.

Y todo esto en un contexto de guerra mediática de larga duración contra Caracas que comenzó con la llegada al poder de Hugo Chávez en 1999 y se intensificó a partir de abril de 2013. Alcanzando unos niveles inauditos de violencia después de la elección del presidente Nicolás Maduro.

Esta atmósfera de agresivo y permanente

acoso mediático produce una insidiosa desinformación sobre Venezuela que confunde hasta a muchos amigos de la revolución bolivariana. En particular porque, en esta era de la ‘post-verdad’, la práctica de la mentira, del fraude intelectual y del engaño descarado no es sancionado por ninguna consecuencia negativa, ni en términos de credibilidad, ni de imagen. Todo vale, todo sirve en esta ‘era del relativismo post-factual’, y ni siquiera los hechos o los datos más objetivos son tomados en consideración. Tampoco se acepta el argumento -tan obvio en el caso de Venezuela- del complot, de la conjura, de la conspiración. De antemano, el nuevo discurso mediático dominante denuncia y ridiculiza el « pretendido complotismo » como un inaceptable argumento de una « vieja narrativa » que no es de recibo...

Todo pues, a principios de 2016, aparecía muy cuesta arriba para el presidente de Venezuela. Hasta el punto de que el achacoso opositor neoliberal Henry Ramos Allup, pasablemente embriagado por su mayoría parlamentaria, se permitió asegurar, en enero de 2016, en su primer discurso como presidente de la Asamblea Nacional, que « en un lapso no mayor a seis meses » sacaría del poder a Nicolás Maduro. Inspirándose sin duda en el golpe de estado institucional contra la presidenta Dilma Rousseff en Brasil, y apostando por una victoria en un eventual referendo revocatorio.

Así estaban las cosas cuando el presidente Maduro, en una magistral secuencia

de jugadas de ajedrez que nadie vio venir -perfectamente legales según la Constitución-, sorprendió a todo el mundo. Renovó, como era su derecho, a los miembros del Tribunal Supremo de Justicia (TSJ), órgano superior del poder judicial, cuya Sala Constitucional tiene la última palabra en materia de interpretación de la Constitución.

Saturada de soberbia, la oposición cometió entonces dos errores mayúsculos :

1) Decidió ignorar las advertencias del TSJ y sesionar con tres diputados del estado Amazonas cuya elección, en diciembre de 2015, estaba bajo suspensión cautelar por irregularidades. Ante esa afrenta, el TSJ dictaminó obviamente que la incorporación de los tres diputados « no electos regularmente » retiraba toda validez a las decisiones de la Asamblea Nacional. De hecho, el TSJ declaró en desacato (desobediencia) a la Asamblea y determinó que « se considerarán nulas todas sus decisiones ». De tal modo que, por sus propios errores, la Asamblea no solo no consiguió legislar, ni controlar al gobierno, sino que, como lo reconocen prestigiosos especialistas en derecho constitucional, se anuló a si misma, dilapidó su poder y se autodisolvió . Esta fue la primera gran victoria de Nicolás Maduro en 2016.

2) En su obsesivo afán de derrocar al presidente, la oposición antichavista también decidió ignorar los requisitos legales (art. 72 de la Constitución), en términos de etapas imprescindibles y

de pasos exigidos por los reglamentos jurídicos, para lanzar un referendo revocatorio en 2016 . Ahí los opositores fracasaron igualmente de manera estrepitosa. Y ello constituyó otra gran victoria de Nicolás Maduro.

Presidente consiguió evitar el colapso energético . Y obtuvo así una de sus más populares victorias del año 2016.

Otro de los problemas importantes (quizás el más grave) que tuvo que enfrentar el Gobierno -consecuencia en parte de la

ante una oferta estructuralmente limitada, los precios se elevaron vertiginosamente. Y se expandió el fenómeno del mercado negro o « bachequeo ». Muchas personas compraban los productos subvencionados por el Gobierno a precios inferiores al del mercado para venderlos a precios superiores al mercado. O los « exportaban » masivamente a los países vecinos (Colombia, Brasil) donde los revendían por el doble o el triple de su precio subvencionado. De tal modo que Venezuela se ‘desangraba’ de sus dólares - cada vez más escasos por el derrumbe de los precios del petróleo- para alimentar a unos ‘vampiros’ que le arrebataban los productos de primera necesidad a los más humildes, a la vez que se enriquecían de manera excepcional. Semejante inmoralidad no podía continuar.

Una vez más, el Presidente Maduro decidió actuar con mano firme. Primero -muy importante- cambió la filosofía de la ayuda social. Y corrigió un error mayúsculo que se llevaba cometiendo en Venezuela desde hacía lustros. Decidió que el Estado, en vez de subvencionar los productos, debía subvencionar a las personas. Para que sólo los pobres, los que realmente lo necesitan, tuvieran acceso a los productos subvencionados por el Gobierno. Para todos los demás, el producto se vende a su precio justo establecido por el mercado. Lo cual evita la especulación y el bachequeo.

Y segunda medida decisiva, el Presidente anunció que, a partir de ahora, el Gobierno pondría todo su empeño en cambiar el carácter económico del país para pasar de un ‘modelo rentista’ a un ‘modelo productivo’. A este respecto, el Presidente



El Presidente Nicolás Maduro primero de Mayo, 2013

Aún así, llegó un momento, hacia marzo-abril de 2016, en que todo se complicó enormemente. Porque, a las embestidas habituales de las fuerzas hostiles a la revolución bolivariana, vinieron a sumarse una impresionante sequía, la segunda más grande desde 1950, y calores extremos causados por el fenómeno El Niño. En Venezuela, el 70% de la energía se genera por hidroelectricidad y la principal central hidroeléctrica depende del embalse Guri. Al reducirse las lluvias, los niveles de este embalse disminuyeron casi al nivel mínimo.

La contrarrevolución trató de aprovechar esta circunstancia para multiplicar los sabotajes eléctricos, buscando a crear caos energético, enojo social y protestas. El peligro era mayúsculo porque al problema eléctrico se sumaba, por efectos de la persistente sequía, la falta de agua potable...

Pero el Presidente Maduro actuó de nuevo con celeridad y adoptó medidas drásticas : decidió la sustitución de millones de bombillos incandescentes por ahorradores ; ordenó el reemplazo de los viejos acondicionadores de aire por otros de nueva tecnología ahorradora ; estableció el medio día laboral en la administración pública ; y decretó un plan especial de ahorro nacional del consumo eléctrico y de agua.

Gracias a estas audaces medidas, el

guerra económica contra la revolución bolivariana- es del abastecimiento alimentario. Hay que recordar que antes de 1999, el 65% de los venezolanos vivían en situación de pobreza y que sólo el 35% podía disfrutar de una alta calidad de vida. O sea, de cada diez venezolanos sólo tres consumían regularmente carne, pollo, café, maíz, leche, azúcar... Mientras que, en los últimos diecisiete años, el consumo alimentario (gracias a la inversión social masiva de la revolución) se disparó en un 80%.

En sí, este cambio estructural, explica por qué, de pronto, la producción nacional de alimentos, mucho más importante de lo que se cree , resultó insuficiente.

Como la demanda aumentó masivamente, también se disparó la especulación. Y



Presidente Maduro y Comandante Fidel Castro de Cuba. Agosto, 2015.

definió « quince motores » para reanimar la actividad económica tanto del sector privado, como del sector público y de la

economía comunal.

Esas dos decisiones esenciales convergen en una original creación imaginada por el Presidente Maduro : los CLAP (Comités Locales de Abastecimiento y Producción) que constituyen una nueva forma de organización popular. Hogar por hogar, los representantes de las comunidades organizadas entregan, a precio regulado, bolsas repletas de alimentos. Muchos de estos alimentos son de nueva producción nacional. Los CLAP deberían abastecer, en los próximos meses de 2017, a unas cuatro millones de familias humildes. Garantizando la alimentación del pueblo. Y rubricando así una nueva gran victoria del Presidente Maduro.

Otra victoria no menor este año 2016 tan difícil, la constituye el récord obtenido en materia de inversión social que alcanzó el 71,4% del presupuesto del país. Es un récord mundial. Ningún otro Estado en el planeta dedica casi las tres cuartas partes de su presupuesto a la inversión social.

En materia de salud, por ejemplo, el número de establecimientos hospitalarios se multiplicó por 3,5 desde 1999. Y la inversión en un nuevo modelo humano de salud pública se multiplicó por diez.

La Misión Barrio Adentro, cuyo objetivo es atender a los enfermos en las áreas urbanas más humildes del país, ha realizado casi 800 millones de consultas y salvado la vida de 1.400.000 personas. Las universidades de medicina han formado a 27.000 nuevos médicos. Y otros treinta mil deben obtener su diploma en 2017. Ocho Estados han alcanzado una cobertura de Barrio Adentro 100% en 2016, cuando la meta era de seis.

Otra victoria social fundamental, no mencionada por los grandes medios dominantes, es la alcanzada en materia de adultos mayores que reciben una pensión de jubilación. Antes de la revolución apenas el 19% de los jubilados recibían una pensión, el resto subsistía a menudo en la miseria o a cargo de sus familiares. Este año 2016, el porcentaje de personas jubiladas que reciben una pensión (aunque no hayan podido cotizar a la seguridad social durante su vida activa) alcanzó el 90%. Un récord en Suramérica.

Otra victoria espectacular -y que tampoco mencionan los grandes medios

dominantes- es la conseguida por la Misión Vivienda encargada de construir viviendas sociales, a precio regulado, para las familias venezolanas humildes.

En 2016, esta Misión entregó nada menos que 359.000 viviendas (a título de comparación, un país desarrollado como Francia apenas construyó, en 2015, 109.000 viviendas sociales). A eso hay que añadir las 335.000 viviendas rehabilitadas



Gran marcha en apoyo del Presidente Maduro. May 13, 2016.

en el marco de la bonita Misión Barrio Nuevo, Barrio Tricolor. Una Misión particularmente elogiada por el genio de la arquitectura Frank Gehry, autor del Museo Guggenheim de Bilbao y del Museo Louis Vuitton en París, que ha declarado desear involucrarse en ella. De tal modo que estamos hablando de casi 700 000



Una grupa de CLAP (Comités Locales de Abastecimiento y Producción)

viviendas sociales entregadas en 2016. Una cifra sin equivalente en el mundo.

Desde que inició su mandato, en 2013, el Presidente Maduro ya ha entregado cerca de un millón y medio de viviendas a familias modestas. Récord mundial pasado bajo silencio por todos los medios hostiles a la revolución bolivariana. Y que hasta muchos amigos omiten a veces de mencionar.

Recordemos, para terminar, algunas de las brillantes victorias conseguidas

en el ámbito geopolítico. Por ejemplo, haber impedido que la Organización de Estados Americanos (OEA), dominada por Washington, condenase a Caracas como lo pretendía el secretario General de esta organización, Luis Almagro, quien invocaba la Carta Democrática contra Venezuela.

O el éxito de la XVII Cumbre del Movimiento de los Países No Alineados (MNOAL) realizada en septiembre de 2016 en el Centro de Convenciones Hugo Chávez de la isla Margarita con la presencia de numerosos jefes de Estado y de Gobierno y de representantes de ciento veinte países que aportaron su solidaridad a Venezuela.

Enfin, en esta campo, la principal victoria del Presidente Maduro, que efectuó varias giras internacionales con ese objetivo, fue el logro inaudito de un acuerdo entre países OPEP y no-OPEP para la reducción concertada de las exportaciones de petróleo.

Este acuerdo histórico, firmado en noviembre de 2016, frenó de inmediato el deterioro de los precios de los hidrocarburos que se desplomaban desde mediados de 2014 cuando sobrepasaban los cien dólares por barril.

Gracias a esta victoria capital, los precios del petróleo -que estaban en 24 dólares en enero- sobrepasaban los 45 dólares a final de diciembre 2016.

Así pues, en el año más duro y más largo, en el que tantos apostaron por su tropiezo, el Presidente Nicolás Maduro, sorteando todos los escollos, todas las trampas y todas las dificultades, ha demostrado su talla excepcional de hombre de Estado. Y de líder indestructible de la revolución bolivariana.

Desde: AVN
<http://avn.info.ve>

**Ignacio Ramonet es un catedrático y periodista español residente en Francia, donde dirigió la revista Le Monde Diplomatique. Es el autor del libro "Cien horas con Fidel".*

The Time is NOW! Upcoming Conference in New York City Calls for the Full Normalization of U.S.-Cuba Relations!

By Alison Bodine

On December 17, 2014 the United States took a first step towards normalizing its relationship with Cuba by restoring diplomatic relations between the two countries. However, in the two years since this historic event, relations between the U.S. and Cuba are still anything but normal. Mainly, the most fundamental criminal aspects of the U.S. blockade have been maintained. The U.S. military has also continued its occupation of Guantanamo and US-backed regime-change programs persist.

In response to continued United States policy against Cuba, activists from the U.S. and Canada have joined together as the U.S.-Cuba Normalization Committee to organize a "National Conference for the Full Normalization of U.S.-Cuba Relations." This important conference is taking place at Fordham University Law School, from March 26-27, 2017.

Over 140 organizations and individuals from the U.S. and Canada have endorsed the conference, which will include workshops, plenary sessions, a large public meeting with prominent Cuba speakers and cultural events. During the conference, there will also be special emphasis on how people can take action in their own cities and communities to demand the US government normalize relations with Cuba. This means an end to all U.S. economic, financial and travel sanctions against Cuba, a return of the Guantanamo territory to

Cuban sovereignty and stopping U.S. funded covert 'regime-change' programs against Cuba.

As the call to action for the Conference states - "Cuba says it is prepared to discuss anything and everything with the United States, including 'democracy' and 'human rights.' This national gathering March 25-26 will be an opportunity to bring activists together from across the United States and Canada to discuss and act on these questions back at their home base and local area."

Along with activists in solidarity with Cuba, the US-Cuba Normalization Committee is also working to bring together youth, students, workers, immigrants and everyone that may be new to Cuba and the history and current state of US-Cuba relations. The conference will be open anyone who would like to learn more about Cuba and to work towards truly normalized relations between the US and Cuba.

In Vancouver, Canada, Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) and Friends of Cuba Against the US Blockade - Vancouver (FCAB-Vancouver) have both endorsed the conference and joined the US-Cuba Normalization Committee.



Especially as close neighbors of the United States, people in Canada have the responsibility to do whatever we can to fight for normalized relations between the US and Cuba. VCSC and FCAB-Vancouver encourage people and organizations in Vancouver, BC and across Canada to get involved in this important and exciting initiative.

For more information about the conference visit: www.nationalcubaconference.org

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By Tamara Hansen

#VanCuba New Year's Eve Party for 58 years of the Cuban Revolution A great success!

On December 31, 2016 at 8pm the doors of the Ukrainian Cultural Centre in East Vancouver, opened to warmly welcome everyone to VCSC's 12th Annual New Year's Eve Party in Celebration of the Gains of the Cuban Revolution. Banners, art, streamers, balloons, tinsel, colourful lights & Cuban flags decorated the hall for the festive celebration. A diverse group of people came together all ages, ethnic communities, and backgrounds to enjoy delicious Cuban food & drinks and welcome the New Year!

Over 140 friends, families and community members came together in support of the Cuban revolution, as the program began the co-hosts Tamara Hansen, Coordinator of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC), and Colleen Glynn, executive member of VCSC and President of

New Year's Eve 2016/2017 12th Annual VCSC Party celebrates the Cuban Revolution!

the Richmond NDP, reflected on the work of VCSC and what the legacy of Comandante Fidel Castro means for that work. Tamara remarked, "This is the first anniversary after 58 years of the Cuban revolution that we celebrate after the passing to Comandante Fidel Castro, but his message to us is clear – it is not time to mourn and be sad – it is time to learn from his vision and legacy and continue forward. Until Victory Always! Hasta La Victoria Siempre! ¡Comandante Fidel Presente Ahora y Siempre! This means Comandante Fidel is present here with us, now and forever!"

The welcoming was followed by beautiful solidarity video greetings from Julio Garmendia Peña, the Cuban Ambassador to Canada and Wilfredo Pérez Bianco, the Venezuelan Consul General in Vancouver. Both emphasized the need to continue solidarity work in Vancouver and across Canada to support the Cuban and Venezuelan revolutionary processes.

The first live music act then took the stage, hip hop artists Joose Justis & Corvid energized the crowd with their lyrics and dynamism.

Once the hip hop set concluded, Bryan Sproule, an organizer with the Communist Party of Canada – Marxist-Leninist brought greetings from his party to the event. He was followed by three 2016 Brigadistas, Azza Rojbi, Max Tennant and Janine Solanki, who recounted their memories from volunteering in Cuba on the Che Guevara Volunteer Work Brigade and invited everyone to join the trip in 2017!

The second live musician then



took the stage, El MX Katracho, sang salsa from the soul, getting many guests out of their seats and onto the dance floor. Once el MX Katracho got everyone warmed up, the salsa lesson began with Janine Solanki, who got everyone prepared for the dancing leading up to 2017.

Soon it was time for the dancing, dancing and more dancing with our two DJs: DJ 100Fuegos & DJ Carlitos Tunes Tunes! Playing everything from Buena Vista Social Club to the Beatles, Descemer Bueno to Taylor Swift there were songs for everyone.

10...9...8...7...6...5...4...3...2...1... HAPPY NEW YEAR! The countdown to midnight rang out as balloons drop, people danced, hugged, kissed and offered each other best wishes for the New Year.

The evening ended with the raffle draw and giving away some great Cuban prizes and an invitation for all to join Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba in its great upcoming activities in solidarity with the Cuban people and their revolution!

Follow Tamara on Twitter: @THans01



Tamara Hansen, coordinator of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) speaks on the importance of Comandante Fidel Castro's legacy



Photos from L to R: Party goers of all ages enjoy their nights, Balloon drop at midnight!

OUR HERITAGE



Rosa Luxemburg

**Revolutionary Marxist Leader
1871-1919**

*Excerpt from Reform or Revolution
Written in 1900*

From the viewpoint of a movement for socialism, the trade-union struggle and our parliamentary practice are vastly important in so far as they make socialistic the awareness, the consciousness, of the proletariat and help to organise it as a class. But once they are considered as instruments of the direct socialisation of capitalist economy, they lose out not only their usual effectiveness but also cease being means of preparing the working class for the conquest of power. Eduard Bernstein and Konrad Schmidt suffer from a complete misunderstanding when they console themselves with the belief that even though the program of the party is reduced to work for social reforms and ordinary trade-union work, the final objective of the labour movement is not thereby discarded, for each forward step reaches beyond the given immediate aim and the socialist goal is implied as a tendency in the supposed advance.

That is certainly true about the present procedure of the German Social Democracy. It is true whenever a firm and conscious effort for conquest of political power impregnates the trade-union struggle and the work for social reforms. But if this effort is separated from the movement itself and social reforms are made an end in themselves, then such activity not only does not lead to the final goal of socialism but moves in a precisely opposite direction.

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Political Editor:

Ali Yerevani - editorftt@mail.com @aliyerevani

Editorial Board:

Tamara Hansen, Aaron Mercredi, Alison Bodine,
Nita Palmer, Janine Solanki, Thomas Davies,
Ali Yerevani

Layout & Design:

Azza Rojbi, Max Tennant, Alison Bodine, Thomas Davies,
Tamara Hansen, Janine Solanki, Ali Yerevani

Copy Editors:

Tamara Hansen, Nita Palmer

Publicity & Distribution Coordinator:

Thomas Davies

Production Manager:

Azza Rojbi

Contributors to this Issue:

Sanam Soltanzadeh, Azza Rojbi, Noah Fine, Max
Tennant, Arnold August, Helen Yaffe

Contact:

Phone (778) 938-1557

Email firethistimecanada@yandex.com

Mail PO Box 21607 Vancouver BC, V5L 5G3

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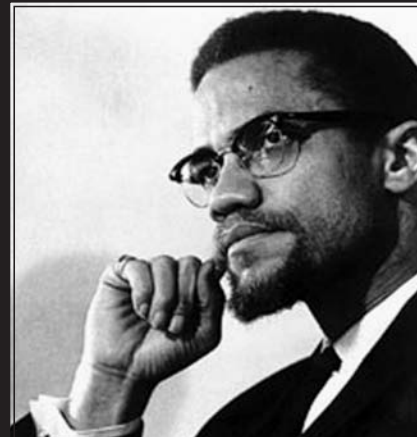
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"By Any Means Necessary..."



MALCOLM X SPEAKS

Excerpt from "Zionist Logic"

Sept. 17, 1964

DOLLARISM

The number one weapon of 20th century imperialism is Zionist dollarism, and one of the main bases for this weapon is Zionist Israel. The ever-scheming European imperialists wisely placed Israel where she could geographically divide the Arab world, infiltrate and sow the seed of dissension among African leaders and also divide the Africans against the Asians.

Zionist Israel's occupation of Arab Palestine has forced the Arab world to waste billions of precious dollars on armaments, making it impossible for these newly independent Arab nations to concentrate on strengthening the economies of their countries and elevate the living standard of their people.

And the continued low standard of living in the Arab world has been skillfully used by the Zionist propagandists to make it appear to the Africans that the Arab leaders are not intellectually or technically qualified to lift the living standard of their people ... thus, indirectly "enducing" Africans to turn away from the Arabs and towards the Israelis for teachers and technical assistance.

"They cripple the bird's wing, and then condemn it for not flying as fast as they."

The imperialists always make themselves look good, but it is only because they are competing against economically crippled newly independent countries whose economies are actually crippled by the Zionist-capitalist conspiracy. They can't stand against fair competition, thus they dread Gamal Abdul Nasser's call for African-Arab Unity under Socialism.

MONTHLY ANTIWAR PETITION DRIVE & RALLY



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Fidel & The Cuban Revolution: How Far We Have Come

Speakers:

► TAMARA HANSEN

Author of "Five Decades of the Cuban Revolution: The Challenges of an Unwavering Leadership"

► ALI YEREVANI

Political Editor of the Fire This Time Newspaper

Multimedia * Speakers * Discussion

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